

Guide to Choosing the Right Assisted Living Residence¹

9 POINT CHECKLIST

The Assisted Living Federation of America developed this Nine Point Program to help you find a senior living community that's right for you!

Be Prepared to Ask Questions

Certain situations and signs may indicate it might be time to consider alternative living arrangements. Generally speaking, families and seniors begin to consider alternatives when it becomes difficult for the elderly family member to carry on important activities of daily living without significant support and assistance from others. Some of the challenges elderly adults can face as they age include loss of vision, poor balance, memory loss or forgetfulness, fatigue, loneliness, dementia, or a physician-prescribed move to a care setting. Whether your needs are immediate or long-term, planning for senior living can seem daunting.



¹The 9 Point Checklist and Guide to Choosing an Assisted Living Residence is adapted from the Assisted Living Federation of America Website. (www.alfa.org)

Source: Assisted Living Executive magazine, Consumer Guide edition, article by Jim Moore of Moore Diversified Services.

1. Sharpen Your Focus On This Important Decision

Before you start your search for senior living options, ask yourself these key questions:

- What do I really know about the different senior living care options?
- What do I need to know?
- What's the best way to get accurate, objective information?
- How would I like to describe my personal successful outcomes a year after move-in?
- Can I afford to live at the community, both now and in the future?
- Can I make the important distinction between price and value?

You may quickly realize that you know very little about long-term care options. That's normal. Most seniors and their families are in the same boat early in their decision process. But there are some ways to identify a well-run senior living community that's right for you. (View the Checklist for Evaluating Communities at www.ALFA.org.)

2. Making the Right Choice Involves Focusing On Three Important Issues

- Quality of life
- Standards of care
- Cost and value

Continued on next page.

Guide to Choosing the Right Assisted Living Residence

9 POINT CHECKLIST

3. Define and Pursue a High Quality of Life

It's difficult to define quality of life as we age and how that quality of life might be fulfilled in a senior living community. Favorable expected outcomes frequently mentioned by seniors and their families include:

- Comfort and peace of mind
- Affordability and financial security
- Quality and value
- Very high standards of care
- Optimized independence
- Socialization
- Experience/adventures/nostalgia
- Individual recognition
- Intellectual stimulation
- Self-expression and fulfillment.

Set your own goals and expectations as you search for a senior living community.



4. Prioritize High Standards of Care

In seeking a residence, pay particular attention to clinical procedures and technological innovations that are used daily in the community. You also want to be sure that staffing levels are consistent with high standards.

Family members should get answers to these questions:

- How will you respond if my "mom" has a medical emergency?
- How will you continuously monitor mom's condition without an unusual invasion of privacy?
- How will you monitor and deal with the possibility that my mom's condition may change?
- How would you describe how you staff the community 24/7 to provide the kind of care my mom will need?
- On average, about how many minutes per 24-hour day does a resident like my mom receive direct, hands-on assistance?

5. Strike a Delicate Balance Between Affordability, Price, and Value

Senior living is a value-enhanced and service-enriched offering — and as such, it may appear expensive. But with the variety of options available and a careful look at true living expenses, you may be less sensitive to price. Put costs in perspective by first objectively evaluating your or your loved one's current cost of living. You may be surprised to find that the assisted living option is more expensive than your current cost of living. This can be especially true when you consider expenses like real estate taxes, home maintenance, and insurance, along with the comprehensive services that are all provided by a senior living residence.

Continued on next page.

Guide to Choosing the Right Assisted Living Residence

9 POINT CHECKLIST

6. Address the Price vs. Value Dilemma

Throughout your life, you've probably been conservative in making most of your purchase decisions. If senior living is the right fit, it will likely be the most important purchase you ever make. So should you seek the lowest price — buying a commodity — or decide on a comfortable, high-value community of choice? It's important to both consider affordable value and optimum life satisfaction.

7. Balance First Impressions with Reality

Take first impressions of a community seriously, but balance those initial impressions with other factors. Some first impressions might include the overall neighborhood setting — the quality of the landscaping, the campus layout, and the residence's exterior. When you enter a residence, think about your comfort level. Check out the public spaces and remember they are a shared extension of the private living space. Remember that you aren't trying to replace the total living area of your current home. You're making an informed trade-off between a relatively large home with a more appropriate sheltered living that offers an extensive array of services specifically designed for this stage of your or your loved one's life.

8. Get Several Detailed, Objective Inputs

Always get a balanced perspective about life in a community you're considering by talking to the professional staff, current residents' family members, and the residents themselves. Ask about a typical day and how staff are involved. Ask about opportunities for social interaction.

Most importantly, ask current residents and their families:

- How do you currently feel about your earlier move-in decision?
- How did you work through the complex decision-making process?
- What were the biggest hurdles you overcame before you actually made the decision?
- If you knew then what you know now, what would you do differently?
- Getting inside the minds of residents and their families will help you decide whether the particular community is a good fit.

9. Carefully Consider What the Future May Hold

As we all age, all of us will experience increasing levels of frailty and other health complications. You need to understand how the community will justify and charge for the costs of increased services that may be needed. Also, consider the community's policies if it were to determine it could no longer care for you or your loved one. It may seem like an uncomfortable dialogue, but knowing the answers to these questions can provide long-term comfort for you and your family.

Call or visit one of the communities listed on www.AssistedSenior.com to learn more about affordable Assisted Living!