



## Key Questions To Ask Assisted Living Staff

Please consider the following list of questions to help make the best selection of an assisted living residence.

### Service Planning

- Are the family and the resident involved in the service planning process? How often are residents' needs assessed? Who completes the assessment?
- Are there special programs for residents who have Alzheimer's disease, other forms of dementia or memory impairments? Are there accommodations for memory-impaired residents to be outside and exercise?
- Are there special programs for residents with disabilities?
- How are emergency medical situations managed? What is the protocol for such events?
- What happens if the health care needs of a resident change? Under what conditions are residents asked to move if there is a change in health status?

### Services and Activities

- Does staff assist residents in administration of medication? If so, what kind of staff and what type of training did they receive?
- Does the residence generally use a particular pharmacy? If applicable, does that pharmacy participate in the individual's Medicare Part D prescription drug plan? Does the pharmacy provide a yearly review and consultation services?
- Are there healthcare services on site? If not, do staff members assist residents and families in making arrangements through a home health agency?

- Are the services of a physical, occupational or speech therapist available or arranged?
- Does the residence provide bed linens and towels?
- Does the facility provide laundry service?
- Are there beauty/barber shop services available on site?
- What recreational and spiritual activities are available? (Obtain or review a copy of the activities calendar.)
- Is there a wellness program?
- Are the activity supplies available for resident use outside of scheduled programs?
- How are individual activity interests and preferences accommodated?
- Is transportation provided for medical appointments and recreational purposes? Is there a fee?
- Are there resident and family councils? How often do they meet?
- What are the suggestion, complaint, or grievance procedures?
- Can hospice care be offered? If so, does the residence coordinate that care with the physician and family?

## **Staff**

- Ask about the residence's staffing levels and philosophy about staffing.
- What training and qualifications are required for staff? Are there on-going training programs provided for staff?
- Do staff members receive special training in care for residents with Alzheimer's or dementia?
- (Observe staff and resident interactions.) Are they positive? Courteous?
- Do staff members handle resident requests in a timely way?
- What is the residence occupancy level?
- Can private duty companions be hired? What is the procedure for that type of service?

- Does the residence have a volunteer program? If yes, what types of activities do the volunteers perform?
- Does the administrator/director practice an "open door" policy?
- Who owns the assisted living community?

## **Dining and Food Services**

- Does the residence accommodate special diets?
- Does a dietician or nutritionist review the menus? (Request or review copies of the menus.)
- How often do the menus rotate? Are residents and families involved in the menu planning?
- Are residents allowed to have guests for meals? Is there a separate guest dining room?
- Are there separate fees for guests?
- What are the criteria for residents to eat meals in their rooms?
- Are there separate fees for having meals delivered to their room?

## **Living Space and Accommodations**

- Are there adequate residence areas for resident use?
- Are the residents' rooms furnished or unfurnished?
- What is the policy about personal belongings?
- What is the policy for overnight guests? Are there guestrooms available? What are the guest fees?
- Is additional storage space available? Is there an extra fee?
- Does the residence meet the rules for people with disabilities?
- Can residents have automobiles? Is there assigned parking? Is there an extra fee?
- Are there patios and courtyards available for resident use? Is there an area for resident gardening?

- Does the residence provide security?
- Are pets allowed to reside in the residence? If so, are there additional fees and or deposits? If not, are pets allowed to visit?

## **Licensure and Certification**

- Is the residence licensed? (Ask to review the last licensing or certification report.)
- If the state requires the administrator to be licensed or certified, is it current?
- Do staff members actively participate in a professional association, such as a state long term care association affiliated with National Center for Assisted Living?

## **Safety**

- Does the residence have a fire sprinkler system throughout the facility?
- Where are smoke detectors located?
- How often does the facility have fire drills?
- Does the facility have an emergency preparedness plan?
- How are emergency and evacuation plans reviewed with residents after admission to reinforce their memory?
- What systems are used to keep residents with dementia or Alzheimer's secure from leaving the residence on their own?

## **Location**

- Is the location of the residence convenient to shopping, medical services, and entertainment areas?
- Can family members and visitors easily locate the residence for visiting?

## **Moving In**

- What does the move-in process entail? What are the paperwork requirements and the timeframes

involved?

- How is the initial assessment managed? Who completes the assessment?
- Is the residence affiliated with a hospital or nursing home should acute or long term care be needed? If so, is there a priority admission process?
- If you need hospital or nursing home care, is your room held? What are the associated fees? Is there a discount for unused services (e.g. meals)?
- Does the residence subscribe to a set of resident rights and responsibilities? Are printed copies of resident rights and responsibilities available?

## **Costs and Fees**

- What is included in the basic monthly cost? Ask for a written copy.
- Does the residence have a written schedule of fees for extra services? If so, request a copy.
- Under what circumstances might the fees change? How much notice is given if there is a fee increase?
- Is there a security deposit and/or an entrance fee? What is the refund policy?
- Can service agreements and or contracts be amended or modified?
- Does the assisted living residence participate in Medicaid?
- Can the residence provide a list of services and activities that cost extra?