

# Assisted Living Facility Considerations

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# Overview

- Visit and observe many assisted living facilities.
- Ask numerous questions.
- Talk about the specific needs of the person living with dementia.
- **Good resource:** *The Good Caregiver*\*

\*Kane RL and Ouellette J. *The Good Caregiver*. New York, New York. Penguin Press

# Entrance Criteria

- What are the rules for entrance?
  - What criteria are there for severely physically/mentally disabled individuals?
- What medical records will you need to provide?
- What financial records will you need to provide?

# Expectations

- What happens if the person living with dementia chooses to leave?
- What rules will the person have to follow?
  - What must he/she sign?
- What level of disability due to dementia can the facility handle?
- Will some types of behavior result in discharge?
- How often do the fees increase?
- How do they care for people with dementia?
- What happens if a resident runs out of money?

# Part I: Costs & Fees

- What does it cost for room and board?
- Does the facility require a deposit in addition to a monthly fee?
- What does it cost for the basic service package?
  - Are bathing, dressing and feeding included?
- What does the facility base its fees on?
- What happens if the facility charges for basic services the resident does not need?
- Can the resident supply some of their own basic services to avoid facility cost?
- Are any charges based on a disability assessment?

# Part II: Costs & Fees

- Are the rates based on a certain amount of time or by the services provided?
- How much personal care does the facility include in the quoted price?
- What do services like hair dressers, medications, laundry, and personal care supplies cost?
- What is the basis (and charge) for greater levels of required care?
- How much incremental care is available?
- Does the facility provide these services on a temporary or a long-term basis?

# Staff

- How long have the staff worked in the facility?
- Do they have a significant turnover in staff?
- Does the facility use many temporary workers?
- Does the facility have an activities director?
  - What are his/her qualifications?
  - What kind of activities do they offer?
- Do outside groups from the community come into the facility?
- Does the staff have any training in dementia care?

# Routines

- Is the facility's activities program designed as leisure or rehabilitation, and is the schedule flexible?
- Can the facility accommodate different routines?
- Can residents control their daily schedules, including what time they get up or go to bed, when, and with whom they eat, or when they bathe?
- Can a resident have his/her own car/parking space?
- Does the facility provide transportation to doctor's appointments, leisure activities, and shopping?
- Can the facility prepare special meals that take into account residents' cultural and other preferences?

# Resident Rights

- Can residents store food in their units?
- Do residents have access to sufficient cooking facilities?
- Do residents participate in the development of their own care plans?
- Do the residents look happy and content?
- Are the units clean? Are there cleaning services?
- How is laundry handled?
- Can residents lock their units?
- Do residents get their own mail?

# Part I: Medical Care

- Does one doctor (or practice) handle the medical needs of the residents, or is each resident expected to find a doctor to help manage their own care?
- Does the nursing staff:
  - Supervise medications?
  - Weigh residents?
  - Make regular assessments of specific physical problems (such as blood pressure)?
  - Oversee changes in medical treatments?
  - Assist with bathing and dressing?

# Part II: Medical Care

- How do they manage medications?
  - If residents can't manage their own medications, how are their medications managed?
  - Who is responsible for safe medication use?
  - Is there an extra charge for medication management?
  - Does the facility help get medicine?
- How much nursing care is available?
  - When and how can a resident request nursing care?
  - How are levels of care established for each resident? How much nursing care is available?
  - When and how can a resident request nursing care?

# Staff Training

- What kind of training and experience does the facility require of its staff?
  - For the Director of Nursing?
  - For the Administrator or Director?
  - For Personal Care Workers?
  - For Memory Care Workers?
  - Who has had formal gerontology or geriatrics training?
- Does the staff have experience working with people with cognitive impairment?

# Part I: Meeting Needs

- Who decides when a resident's level of care has changed and how to respond to it?
  - Are caregivers involved in talking about changes and how to respond?
  - Are caregivers called when there are changes in care routines?
  - Who is notified when a change is noted?
- How do they assess and manage emotional issues (like anxiety, grief, and aggression)?

# Part II: Meeting Needs

- Does the facility have a system in place to make regular observations and respond to changes?
  - What is the cost for extra care? Can they arrange it?
  - Can residents select private individuals for their care, or must they use care staff provided by the facility?
  - Can the facility provide aides or do you hire your own?
  - Can you pay for part-time services of an aide who is already on staff?
  - Do you hire through an agency or can you hire independently?
  - Is there a liability waiver for independent staff?

# Customs and Traditions

- Does the facility pay attention to customs and traditions of its residents?
  - Foods, holiday celebrations, special festivals
  - Do they encourage different customs and traditions?
- Is there special attention given to a specific ethnic group?
  - Do most of the residents come from one group?
  - Does the facility organize programs around specific groups and related practices or events?
- Do any staff speak the native language of the potential resident?

# Memory Care

- Is there a separate area for residents with memory issues?
  - What are the criteria for entry into these units?
- What training do staff in these special units receive?
- What is different about the care given in these units?
- What training do the staff have for working with persons living with dementia?

# Affiliations

- Does the facility have a nursing home nearby that is run by the same company?
- Do they refer residents to a certain nursing home when they need more care?
- What is the facility's financial relationship to the nearby nursing home?
- What is the impact of having a nursing home so close to the Assisted Living Facility?

# Quality Measures

- All assisted living facilities must follow rules/regulations.
  - Those rules vary from state to state and some states may offer more protections to residents than others.
  - The federal government does not regulate them.
- Some states have records on violations and sanctions.
- Contact the Aging and Disability Resource Center in your area to see what information is available.
- Call your local Area Agency on Aging or use the Eldercare Locator: 1-800-677-1116.