

GUIDE TO SELECTING AN ADULT CARE FACILITY

When a loved one is diagnosed with Alzheimer's or a related memory disorder, families often come together to provide the necessary support and care. Many times there is one person in the family who takes on the full-time role of caregiver. This individual may feel impacted on their family life, while providing a safe and loving home, preparing meals, providing personal assistance, and nursing care.

Naturally, you want to continue to care for your loved one at home as long as possible, but there may come a time when more help is required than you can give. There are not set rules regarding whether it is time to move your loved one into a facility. If you become ill, for example, you will not be able to care for your loved one. Do not think of it as giving up your role as primary care giver, but gaining partners in caregiving. These caregivers can help improve the health, well-being, and safety of your loved one.

Ask the following questions.

Are you:

- Able to provide stimulating activities?
- Getting more impatient?
- Less healthy and unable to care for your loved one?
- Observing a less safe environment for your loved one?

If your answer is yes to any or all of these questions, it may be time to consider placement.

Types of Facility (significant in terms of level of care, financial reimbursement, and government monitoring)

- **Independent Housing and miscellaneous facilities** are not monitored by the government. Residents reside in independent apartments, most times efficiencies. The government does regulate the home care agencies that may provide care within these facilities.
- **Enriched Housing** provides independent living with a variety of services available through home health agencies for assistance with dressing, toileting, and other activities of daily living.
- **Adult Care Facility (ACF)** services include 24 hour residential care, meals, housekeeping, medication assistance, laundry and assistance with dressing, toileting, and other activities of daily living. ACF may have a specialized area with activities geared for dementia residents within the facility.

- **Assisted Living Program (ALP)**. Assisted living is a residential care model that provides services to persons needing 24-hour assistance with activities of daily living, such as, toileting, grooming, bathing, and dressing. These services are provided even if their needs increase. Many of the same personal care services that are provided in a typical nursing home are provided in a more residential environment. However, unlike skilled nursing facilities, they are not equipped to provide skilled medical care. These facilities allow residents to “age in place,” rather than requiring them to move into a nursing home when more care is required. According to the New York Department of Health, ALP’s are monitored by the state. Many are located in adult homes or adult care facilities, not in apartment buildings. State certified ALP’s are eligible for reimbursement by Medicaid. ALP’s may have a separate unit for dementia residents, as well as activities geared for them. Extensive ongoing personal assistance or skilled nursing is moved into a skilled nursing facility or nursing home.

Note: Not all assisted living facilities are certified by the state. Some adult homes around the country are using this term to indicate that they provide a residence for those who need some extra help with activities of daily living. Programs that are not monitored by New York do not have to adhere to the same strict guidelines and regulations. **Adult homes and assisted living facilities** may also seem very similar because of the types of service provided and the types of residents being served.

What are Enriched Housing, Adult Care Facilities, Assisted Living Programs discharge policies?

- Under what circumstance will I have to leave the facility?
- If I need more services and how would that decision be reached?
- Will staff assist me in finding a new place if it becomes necessary for me to move?
- If there is a prolonged hospital or nursing home stay, will I have to continue to pay for my unit while I am away? How long will my unit be held for me?
- How much notice must I give if I plan to move out? What are the facility’s refund policies, if I should move out in the middle of the month?

How much does it cost to live in this facility?

- What is the facility’s basic monthly rate?
- How are extra services priced?
- Will notice be given if an increase in rent or services occurs?
- When is payment expected?
- What happens if my own personal resources are exhausted?

Special Facility Characteristics

- Enclosed outside courtyard
- Personal alarm
- Secured locked units (numbered key pad code to exit)
- Environmental cues (pictures, such as a plate outside the dining area or a toilet on the bathroom door)

What should you look for in a facility?

- **Cleanliness**

Is it clean? Look past the furnishings and into corners, windows, and baseboards. Ask how often housekeeping is provided in the room. What services does maintenance provide and how long does it take for them to respond? Odors may indicate a lack of cleanliness and are likely to indicate a problem.

- **Activities**

Ask about resident activities, both during the week and on weekends. Ask to watch activities. Are they well attended? Do the staff and the residents seem to be enjoying the activity? Look for the community event calendar. Are the activities tailored to the needs of each individual? Look for small and large group activities, and outings. If religious services are important, inquire about them.

- **Staff**

Observe the staff's attitude and friendliness. Are they interacting with current residents? Do they make eye contact and listen to them? If you feel welcomed, so will your loved one. How many people are involved in residents' care? Are there licensed nurses on staff throughout the day and evening? What kind of dementia care training does the staff have? How often does training occur? Is there a high turnover rate? Who can the family speak to in the event of a problem? How often are they available? Is there a physician available? Who will examine their eyes and teeth or repair dentures?

- **Secured Area**

A safe and secure environment is essential to meeting the needs of someone with dementia. Is there a secure outdoor area for the residents to enjoy? Do they host activities, such as gardening in this area? Are the residents with dementia wearing "Safe Return" jewelry in the event they leave the secured unit?

- **Personal Care**

As you tour the facility, look at the residents. Are they well groomed (shaved, nails trimmed, and hair clean and combed)? Discuss bathing options and your loved one's preferences. Are the residents' clothes appropriate? Does the staff treat residents with respect? How often is the laundry done? Is there a beauty salon on the premises?

- **Dining Room**

Is there a positive dining atmosphere? Are the meals nutritious and tasty? During your tour, taste the food and meet some of the residents. This may be a good time to include your loved one. Ask what happens if a resident is not able to go to the dining room for a meal. What if the individual is not able to self-feed? Will the meals be tailored to meet the needs and tastes of your

loved one? Can or will they accommodate special diets, for example, diabetics?

- **Visiting**

What are the visiting hours? Can I take my family member out? Can the family have a party at the facility and if so, where? Are there charges?

- **Other Questions to Ask**

Does the program accept Medicaid? What type of grievance procedure is in place? Does the residence have a bill of rights? Does long-term care insurance cover this level of care? Can Medicare services be brought into the facility? Is the program sanctioned by the state? What services are provided in the monthly rate, and what will cost extra? Ask for the facility's policies and procedures. Can you participate in family council? Is a support group on the premises?

- **Final Note**

As you tour, can you imagine you or your loved one living there? Did you feel comfortable while touring?

Don't wait until a crisis happens to consider your options. Plan ahead and start your search early. Remember you are not alone. The Alzheimer's Association will assist you with resources. Call 626-0600 or 1-800-272-3900.