**Assisted Living Residences**

**What are Assisted Living Residences?**

Assisted living refers to a level of care and support between independent living and a nursing home. While assisted living residences vary, they generally provide 24 hour staff, recreational activities, meals, housekeeping, laundry and transportation. Almost all assisted living residences offer short-term respite stays, whether for a weekend or a few weeks. Respite allows caregivers a break from their day-to-day duties and time to attend to their own needs or to take a vacation.

**Questions to ask when choosing an Assisted Living Residence:**

**The Residence**

- Are there any openings in the assisted living? If not, how long is the waiting list?
- What are the admission qualifications?
- If there is a prolonged hospital or nursing home stay, will the room need to be paid during this time? How long will the room be held?
- How much notice is given for rate increases for the room and services?
- What type of billing process does the facility use?
- What services and supplies are included in the basic daily rate? Which are charged above the daily rate? (Ask for a written schedule of charges.)
- Can residents stay if their payment source is converted to Medicaid? How are concerns and complaints resolved?
- Are nurse and emergency call buttons located and operational at each resident’s bed and bathroom facilities? Are they being answered timely?

**Atmosphere**

- Is the atmosphere and attitude of the staff members warm, pleasant and cheerful?
- Do the residents look well cared for and generally content?
- Speak with residents, families, volunteers and staff about the assisted living: how happy are they?
- Are guests allowed? What are visiting hours? Is there a private space for get-togethers?
- Does staff treat residents with dignity and respect? Are residents rights posted?

**Staff and Services**

- Determine the facility’s rules regarding physician coverage. Is there a physician on staff or call and, if so, how often are they available?
- Is the assisted living staffed with at least one RN or LPN on each shift? Are licensed nurses assigned to each floor or wing?
- What is the ratio of support staff per resident? What is the ratio of nurses? Is it the same for evenings and weekends?
- Are aides certified and fully trained before they are hired?
- Does the facility promote person-centered care?
• Is there an activities director? What types and how often are the activities? Are there activities for residents confined to their rooms?
• Are religious activities offered and for which faiths? Do residents have an opportunity to attend religious services and talk with clergy?
• Does the facility arrange for transportation for residents?

Dining
• Will the assisted living meet food preferences and prescribed diets?
• Is there a menu selection offered?
• Are residents’ ethnic and cultural food preferences honored?
• Observe a meal. Does the food look appetizing and is it served on time and at the proper temperatures? Are the meals varied daily?
• Do residents who need it get help eating, whether in the dining room or in their own room? Are nutritious between-meal snacks available? Can snacks be kept in rooms?

Alzheimer’s Concerns
• Is there a separate unit for persons with Alzheimer’s disease?
• Is it a secure environment with space to wander?
• Is the staff trained specifically in Alzheimer’s care and how to handle specific behaviors? What kind of training is provided and how often?
• Are there activities designed specifically for residents with dementia?
• Does the dining room environment support the person with dementia’s remaining abilities and allow them to feel success during the dining experience?

Where do I begin?

Begin by calling several assisted living residences in your area of interest. Visiting prospective residences will help determine which place will best be able to meet the needs of the prospective resident and the needs of their caregiver. Not all settings will be appropriate for individuals with memory loss and the facility may not be able to provide care throughout the progression of the disease. It is important to consider the length of time that the setting will remain appropriate and when a subsequent move may be required.

The Long Term Care Ombudsman is available to help you identify which long-term care setting is most appropriate based on the person’s needs and preferences. In Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake and Lorain Counties, contact them at 800-365-3112; in Ashtabula County, call 800-589-5826.

For additional resources contact:

Alzheimer’s Association website (Community Resource Finder)  www.alz.org
Area Agency on Aging (Ashtabula)  800-686-7367  www.aaa11.org
Area Agency on Aging (Cuyahoga, Lake, Lorain and Geauga)  216-621-8010  www.psa10a.org
The Ohio Department of Aging web site  www.ltcohio.org
Yellow Pages  www.yellowpages.com

Disclaimer: Listing in this resource list does not constitute an endorsement, referral or statement of qualification by the Alzheimer’s Association, nor does the Association screen or evaluate those listed. Users of this resource list should determine for themselves the qualifications of any assisted living facilities prior to utilizing their services. This list is not all-inclusive.