HOW TO RESEARCH ASSISTED LIVING COMMUNITIES

Top tips for finding the best fit in senior care for your needs.

When it becomes evident that further support is needed for a family member, the process of deciding the type of assistance needed and finding the appropriate living situation can be overwhelming. You've undoubtedly come across a range of choices all of which present various options in care for seniors. If help with household tasks or personal care is needed, assisted living can be a good fit for those who wish to maintain independence while receiving supportive services as needed.

With so many variations in assisted living available, the following research tips can aid you in making the best possible choice for your circumstances. We've also included key questions which can guide you in learning more about assisted living communities.

Make a list.

When researching senior living residences in your preferred location, the internet can be very helpful starting point. Start by putting together a broad list of options and all of the provided services. The terminology may vary between communities, so use this senior living glossary for a quick reference tool.

In addition to services, it's important to make note of details such as extra-curricular programming, daily assistance, transportation services and staff support. Understanding these differences will provide insight into each assisted living community.

- What different floor plans are offered?
- Do residences include kitchens or kitchenettes?
- What amenities, activities and events are available?
- Are linens/laundry, transportation and other services handled?
- When and where are meals served?

Talk to experts.

Have a discussion with primary care physicians, asking advice and gaining a clear understanding of any health problems, mobility difficulties or social concerns that will impact your search. Verify that any current medical needs will be met within the communities you consider, and also think about health issues that may arise in the future. While some assisted living communities have licensed medical providers on hand at all times, others may not. It's also worth looking into whether rehabilitation services or therapeutic treatments are available at each community.

It can also be beneficial to check with a social worker, lawyer, financial planner, geriatric care manager or representative from a local senior center for additional suggestions. As you cross-reference this information with your initial research, you'll be able to narrow down the communities which best fit your care needs.

- Is medical care provided on site?
- Is a licensed medical care provider on site 24 hours per day?
- Do you create a written care plan for each resident?
- What services are available on site in case an individual's needs for care change?

Plan a tour.

Once you've narrowed the list of communities, it's time to collect first-hand information and get a clear picture of each community by taking a tour. Take notice of the activities going on and make time to visit with residents and staff. As you make several trips to your preferred communities, vary the times of your visit and you'll obtain a better sense of the culture and environment. You'll get a well-rounded perspective of the community by observing a variety of situations – mealtimes, recreational opportunities and social events can all be helpful. Download the tour guide checklist to help you compare communities.

Before leaving, gather any brochures or materials that will help bring to mind information about the community once you've left.

- Is the community clean and inviting?
- Do you find the community easy to navigate?
- Can you easily find handrails and call buttons in rooms and bathrooms?
- Are other safety/security measures being taken?
- How does the staff interact with residents and visitors?
- Does the community allow pets?

Evaluate costs.

Cost and location can be highly important factors as you seek an assisted living community. When considering the costs involved, first and foremost, establish exactly what is included in each community's monthly rate. The base rate at a community may seem less expensive, but it may not account for certain utilities, services or extra charges. In addition, some communities charge a buy-in or upfront entry fee upon move-in. Identifying this information early on will help you make financial arrangements for the best possible decision.

Next, when considering location, bear in mind that while it might be most convenient to opt for a community in close proximity to friends and family, the main priority should be finding the overall best fit for you or your loved one's needs. Remember that assisted living communities often provide transportation services for individuals to take various trips around town for doctor's appointments, shopping and church services.

- What are the entrance/community fee(s) and security deposit?
- What is the price of the monthly rent?
- Are utilities included and if so, which utilities?
- Does the community have a contract available detailing services, fees and policies?
- What are the costs for additional services?

With the use of these research tips, you'll have the opportunity to learn as much as you can about all of the assisted living communities under consideration. With this expanded knowledge, you can feel even more confident in making the best possible selection in senior care for your loved one.

THE OAKS AT FLOWER MOUND is a convenient, inviting community offering a rich, engaging retirement lifestyle. Located just 30 minutes northwest of Dallas, our assisted living and memory care community empowers residents to live life to the fullest – providing a comfortable, contemporary environment with specialized support as needed. For additional information, please call us at **469-373-1080**.

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