

What to Consider When Choosing... Memory Care



When Alzheimer's disease and other dementia-related conditions make it impossible for a loved one to live safely and securely in his or her own home, an assisted living facility that specializes in memory care may be the answer.

But choosing the right place for your loved one can be a challenge. Not all facilities are created equal and it is important to visit – maybe even more than once – any place you are considering before you make a decision. As you look around, consider the following key areas, ask questions and judge for yourself if the facility would make a good home for your loved one.

Family Involvement

- Is your participation in care planning welcomed and encouraged?
- Will you be immediately informed of changes in resident's condition and care needs?
- Can you visit anytime you like?
- Do staff members encourage communication from families?
- Is there programming available that includes family participation?
- Are pets welcome to visit?

Staffing

- Is there a medical director on site and can primary care be provided without your loved one needing to leave the facility?
- Is the staff specifically trained and/or certified in dementia care?
- Are staff members trained to recognize people with dementia as unique individuals, and care is personalized to meet specific needs, abilities and interests?
- Is the staff educated about each residents' personal history, life experiences, family, talents and interests?

Residents

- Are residents comfortable, relaxed and involved in activities?
- Are residents given choices about their daily routines and are those choices respected?
- Are residents treated with respect and dignity when being assisted with personal care?
- Do residents appear well-groomed, clean and dressed appropriately?

Programs and Services

- Are services and programming appropriate and based on patients' specific health and behavioral care needs?
- Are there daily activities that support residents' physical, emotional and spiritual health?
- Are activities available on the weekends and in the evenings?
- Do activities address the specific needs, interests and abilities of residents?
- Are care plans reviewed frequently to ensure changing needs are addressed?

Environment

- Do indoor spaces allow for freedom of movement and promote independence? Are they clean, free of odors and clutter and designed to minimize falls?
- Do residents have access to secured outdoor areas where they can spend time and participate in activities?
- Are all indoor areas on one floor, brightly decorated and secured?
- Is furniture in common areas clean, comfortable and in good condition?
- Are residents' rooms private, clean, well lit and equipped with a private bathroom?
- Can residents bring familiar items with them, such as photos, bedding and furniture?
- Are devices such as lighting, large clocks and calendars and signs used to help residents orient themselves?

Meals

- Are there regular meal and snack times?
- Is the food appetizing and can special dietary needs be accommodated?
- Are meals served family style to encourage social interaction and is the dining area warm, inviting and free of distractions?
- May family and friends join residents at mealtime?
- Does the staff have a plan for monitoring adequate nutrition?
- Does the staff provide appropriate assistance based on person's abilities (for example, encouragement during meals or assisted feeding in advanced stages)?

Policies and Procedures

- Are family and friends able and encouraged to participate in care?
- Have all the facilities policies, including those related to finances and discharge, been discussed with you and have you had all your questions answered?
- Are physical and chemical restraints prohibited? What is the policy on the use of anti-anxiety and psychotropic medications?

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