

Living Assistance Checklist

As people age, some find themselves living alone, single-handedly trying to manage the expense and upkeep of nearly empty homes. This time of life also brings with it an increased risk of falling, poor nutrition and difficulty managing medications.

The time to start exploring the different living assistance facilities is sooner rather than later. Many struggling seniors improve visibly once they move into a living assistance facility. They can live independently with less effort, eat nutritious meals regularly, engage in exercise programs and enjoy social activities with people their age. Help is available, if needed, for bathing, dressing, and managing medications.

The following is a checklist of important services, amenities and accommodations in assisted living communities. Since each community is unique, we recommend making several visits, at various times of day, to each residence you are considering.

Atmosphere

- Is the location of the community appropriate and convenient for everyone?
- As you enter the lobby and tour the residence, is the decor attractive and homelike?
- Do the grounds offer safe areas for outside activity or enjoyment?
- Did you receive a warm greeting from staff welcoming you to the residence?
- Does the administrator/staff call residents by name and interact warmly with them as you tour the residence?
- Do residents socialize with each other and appear happy and comfortable?

Physical Features

- Is the floor plan easy to follow? Note the hallways, doorways, exit and entrance areas to public areas for accessibility and safety features.
- Is the residence clean, free of odors and appropriately heated/cooled?
- Are temperatures consistent throughout the building and kept comfortable for residents?
- Does the residence have sprinklers and clearly marked exits?
- Is there a generator or back up power source, or a plan for extended power outages?

Admissions, Costs & Finances

- Is the contract available for you to review?
- Does the residence have a process for assessing a potential resident's need for services and are those needs addressed periodically?
- What is the resident's and family's involvement in the development of the service plan?
- How often do rates increase and what is the average increase amount?
- Are there different costs for various levels or categories of services?

Medication & Health Care

- Is there a written plan for the care of each resident?
- What kind of medical support is available for residents? Are there licensed nurses on duty?
- Is self-administration of medication allowed?
- Is there a staff person to coordinate home care visits from a nurse, physical therapist, occupational therapist, etc. if needed?
- Is staff available to assist residents who experience memory, orientation, or judgment losses?

Services

- Is staff available to provide 24-hour assistance with activities of daily living (ADLs) if needed? ADLs include: Dressing; Eating; Mobility; Hygiene and Grooming; Bathing; Toileting; Using the Telephone; Shopping; and Laundry.
- Does the residence provide housekeeping services in residents' units?
- Does the residence provide transportation to doctors' offices, the hairdresser, shopping and other activities desired by residents?
- Are pharmacy, barber/beautician and/or physical therapy services offered on-site?

Room Features

- Are different sized and types of units available?
- Is a 24-hour emergency response system accessible from the unit?
- Do bathrooms have rails where they can be useful? Are the fixtures for the sink and shower easy to manage and do they offer a no-scald feature?
- Are emergency call lights and/or intercoms placed in convenient locations throughout the room?
- Are intercoms used in the building and for what purpose?
- Are residents able to bring their own furnishings for their unit and what may they bring? What is provided?
- Do all units have a telephone and cable TV and how is billing handled?

Activities

- Is there a staff member or coordinator available to lead or organize activity programs?
- Ask for a schedule of activities. Do you see a variety of programs and events that are able to meet a wide range of interests?
- Is there evidence of an organized activities program, such as a posted daily schedule, events in progress, reading materials, visitors, etc.?
- Do residents participate in activities outside of the residence in the neighboring community?
- Do volunteers, including family members, come into the residence to help with or conduct programs?

Dining and Meal Service

- Does the residence provide three nutritionally balanced meals a day, seven days a week?
- Are all meals provided and how are they served, buffet-style or is table service offered?
- Do dining room menus vary from day to day and meal to meal?
- Are snacks available?
- Are special diets accommodated? Are various food preferences taken into consideration?
- Are common dining areas available?

*Beaver Meadows is an 83-bed assisted living community located in Brighton Township.
Owned by St. Barnabas Health System.*



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