

SEARCHING FOR AN ASSISTED LIVING FACILITY

Here's a few items for your checklist:

- o Who takes you on a tour? A sales agent or one of the care providers or managers?
- o Are all the floors nonslip? How proactive are they about safety?
- o Do they have installed a system that supports "I've fallen and I can't get up" necklaces, where a caregiver on the floor is notified and can be at your side in less than 2 minutes?
- o How well are the bathrooms designed? Do they have easy-entry shower stalls?
- o How well do they accommodate wheel chairs?
- o What's the quality and variety of the food? Eat there a few times to find out.
- o Can you start out as "independent living" and move to "assisted living" if need be? And to nursing care if needed?
- o Do they have a robust exercise program? Is a physical therapist on site or have scheduled visits to the facility?
- o Does a podiatrist have scheduled visits?
- o Does a hearing specialist have scheduled visits?
- o Is there a gift shop where you can buy necessities like cards and gifts for grandchildren and cookies and tea?
- o Does the place "smell" institutional rather than like a nice residence? (This turned my brother off of one place.)
- o What planned activities do they have? Are there regular church services? Are there vans that take you to local stores and malls? Are there periodic outings, say to local plays or concerts? Does a bookmobile visit?
- o Do they have transportation to doctors and dentists?
- o How far is it to the closest hospital? AND HOW GOOD IS THAT PARTICULAR HOSPITAL? Does your preferred doctor practice at that hospital?
- o WHAT IS THE THE TURNOVER RATE OF THE STAFF? This is EXTREMELY important!! How genuinely cheerful do the staff seem to be?
- o When you do an investigative visit, do residents come up to you and say "This is a very nice place to live." The only place where that happened to us was at Village Woods.

There's other checklist items, but that's all I can think of right now. Above all, follow your instincts. If you have some nagging feeling that you might be getting ripped off, no matter how faint that feeling might be, take that feeling seriously, as it's probably correct. Follow your instincts. There's a lot of wolves out there ready to relieve you of your money. Beware of marketing schemes.

Our personal observation was that the church-affiliated facilities are much better run AND much more affordable than the for-profit ones. But any independent/assisted living facility will burn through your money pretty fast. Do the math. You will probably want to opt for the least costly alternative for as long as possible, like getting in-home care, or else you will find yourself without funds within a few years and forced to go into a nursing home because that is your only financial option.

Here are further 'tips' from a management person of such facilities:

- 1.) Non-profits are uniformly rated higher by Inspecting Agencies in quality of care.
- 2.) SMELL! SMELL! SMELL! A facility should have no odor except for the food being cooked! Any urine or "old" smell is a major tip-off. Too heavy a bleach/cleanser smell (assuming no one is cleaning at the time) is a sign that maintenance is not using the proper ratio of cleaner and water for cleaners.
- 3.) Are the public space/hallway areas decorated attractively- are there private areas for family visits or areas away from community TVs?
- 4.) Look at the actual staffing patterns- make sure the "ratio" is a good one.

Some of the other categories may give indications of care, but are not mandatory:

1. Federal Law requires 90 day visits for podiatrists
2. Non-slip floors are not always appropriate
3. Gift shops are nice, but not necessary

Most importantly, as mentioned, do people seem happy, clean and well-cared for?

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