

# *A Consumer Guide to Satisfaction in Assisted Living*



With Locations In:

901 East Main Street • Collegeville PA 19426 • 610 - 409-8910

103 N. Larkspur Dr • Palmyra PA 17078 • 717 - 832-2900

3121 State Hill Rd • Wyomissing PA 19610 • 610 - 927-0310

2288 Grandview Rd • Hanover PA 17331 • 717 - 632-9178

With Special Thanks to

and



**ALFA**

ASSISTED LIVING FEDERATION  
OF AMERICA

*Columbia Cottage is a proud member of ALFA and participates in training and education sponsored by ALFA.*

## What is Assisted Living?

*A ... special combination of housing, supportive services, personalized assistance and healthcare designed to respond to the individual needs of those who need help with activities of daily living (ADL's) and instrumental activities of daily living (IADL's). Supportive services are available ... to meet the scheduled and unscheduled needs in a way that promotes maximum dignity and independence for each resident and involves the resident's family and friends.*

*(Assisted Living Federation of America, April 24, 1994)*

## What are Activities of Daily Living (ADL's)?

These are basic tasks that may become difficult for frail, older people including:

- Bathing
- Dressing
- Eating
- Toileting
- Walking (ambulation)

## What are Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADL's)?

These are other regular tasks that enable us to perform the activities of daily living including:



- Cooking
- Grocery shopping
- Handling personal finance
- Home maintenance
  - Housekeeping
  - Transportation
- Self-medication



## An Informed Consumer is a Satisfied Customer

If you, or someone close to you is thinking about moving into an assisted living residence, there is a lot to learn before taking such an important step. When searching for an appropriate assisted living residence, it is important to be an informed consumer. As you start your search, you need to assess your needs as they are now and ask yourself how your needs might change over time. If you are helping to find a residence for someone close to you, it is important to respect their needs and wishes by including them in the process as much as possible.

**The two most critical elements in finding the most appropriate assisted living residence are visits to the residence, and the specific contracts that are offered.** Visiting several residences enables you to see what each is like, to compare them, and to ask question of the staff and residents. You should be prepared to visit several residences. Start by making a list of residences in your area. You can locate assisted living residences though your local yellow pages, state or local Area Agency on Aging (AAA) at **(610) 278-3601**, the Pennsylvania long-term care ombudsman's office at **(717) 783-7247**, state health and welfare agency, local newspapers, The Assisted Living Federation of America at **(703) 691-8100**, or the American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging at **(202) 783-2242**.

Once you have arranged a visit to a residence, take along a copy of the checklist provided here and **ask a lot of questions.**

## Understanding Assisted Living Contracts

The contract is the legal document that states what arrangements you and the residence have agreed to, regardless of anything that was promoted and promised through conversations, brochures and other sales pitches. The more specific the contract, the greater your legal protections will be regarding services and fees. A residence is only legally bound to provide what is stated in the contract. The most important aspects to the contract include:

- Fees (services that are covered, when they are due, penalties, when they are increased and refund policies)
- Duration of contract and renewal terms
- Termination of contract
- Residents' rights and other rules
- Policy regarding internal and external resident transfers
- Obligations and responsibilities of the residence.



### 1) Services

Typical services in an assisted living residence include help with meals, housekeeping, and other daily and social activities, as well as some general supervision and some help with taking medications. Because contracts often do not spell out in detail the scope of services provided, it is very important to know exactly which services are covered and which require extra payment. You also should find out whether residents and their families are notified in advance and in writing of any changes in services and related charges, or are involved in making decisions about these things.



### 2) Transfer and Discharge Policies

Assisted living residences often stress their commitment to allowing residents to “age in place.” It’s not uncommon for residents and their families to believe that an assisted living residence will be the resident’s final home. It is critical to understand under what circumstances a residence may transfer residents, within the residence or to another one, or discharge them entirely.

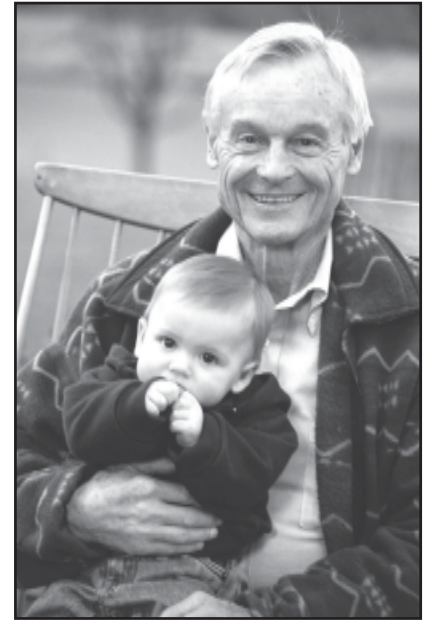
Questions to Ask ... What will happen if residents need other/ additional services? Under what circumstances residents are transferred or discharged? How transfer and discharge decisions are made and by whom? Whether there is a room hold policy for hospitalization or other reasons? Whether residents have to pay for rooms if they are not using them? How much notice is given to residents who have to leave? How much notice residents who decide to leave must provide the residence? What is the refund policy?

### 3) Residents' Rights

Residents' Rights outline the rules that affect residents' personal conduct and entitlements. Always request a copy of the Residents' Rights, as they may not be included as part of the contract but are usually required under state regulations.

Questions to Ask... Does a resident have a right to:

- Make special requests such as newspaper delivery?
- Smoke and/or use alcohol responsibly?
- Help select a roommate if sharing a room?
- Come and go at will and have personal visitors come and go?
- Reside at the residence – i.e., do monthly fee cover a specific unit designated in the contract or simply entitle you to reside at the residence?



### 4) Reputation and Viability of Residence

A few last considerations: It is always important to find out the financial viability of any company before you give them your money. Be sure to check business references on the residence or parent company if there is one. You may want to contact the local Chamber of Commerce and with residents and their families to get a sense of the company's business philosophy and financial security.



**Assisted Living for Independence, Dignity and Choice**

## **ALFA's Philosophy of Assisted Living Care**

*In addition to the checklist, we encourage you to look for a general philosophy of care based on 10 principles — principles that make Assisted Living residents the top priority.*

- “ Offering cost effective quality care personalized for the individual's needs
- “ Fostering independence for each resident
- “ Treating each resident with dignity and respect
- “ Promoting the individuality of each resident
- “ Allowing each resident choice of care and lifestyle
- “ Protecting each resident's right to privacy
- “ Nurturing the spirit of each resident
- “ Involving family and friends in care planning and implementation
- “ Providing a safe, residential environment
- “ Making the Assisted Living residence a valuable community asset