



Assisted Living: It's The Right Place When It's the Right Time

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You love each other but it has become next to impossible to live with each other. The evidence suggests that home is the best place for any person, especially as one ages. Notwithstanding, as Alzheimer's progresses, there comes a point when the around-the-clock challenges overwhelm everyone with stress and responsibility.

Not too long ago your choices were limited to your home or the nursing home. Today, there is a bright alternative. Assisted living facilities (ALFs) offer you or your loved one the ability to be independent and live a high quality of life while getting necessary care.



According to the Assisted Living Federation of America, more than a million Americans live in an estimated 20,000 assisted living residences. Residents of ALFs receive help with activities such as eating, bathing, dressing, laundry, housekeeping and medications, while keeping their independence, their own apartments, and sometimes even their pets and car.

Assisted living facilities are for adults who need help with everyday tasks but don't need full-time nursing care. No more housekeeping, yard work or cooking big meals. Assisted living provides opportunities for socialization and numerous social activities. Tasty foods are prepared by professionals who gear menus to meet special dietary requirements, and are served in warm community dining rooms, and in some cases even in an in-house restaurant.

Private apartments, most with private baths and some with kitchenettes, allow seniors to enjoy the comforts of home with the added plus of knowing that help is available and nearby if needed.

Most state governments regulate ALFs. As there are no national regulations, assisted living facilities differ from state to state as do the laws protecting the consumer. They can vary in size from small homes housing 6-12 seniors to large full-service high-rise facilities. They may be operated by non-profit or for-profit companies. Most communities





have between 25 and 120 units. There is no single blueprint, because consumers' preferences and needs vary widely. Units may vary in size from one room to a full apartment.

Some assisted living facilities are part of retirement communities. Others are near nursing homes, so a person can move easily if needs change. Many now coordinate their facilities with hospice care from other organizations, allowing a person to set up their ALF apartment to their liking, then settle down there permanently.



Services vary from facility to facility. Most include assistance with meals, bathing, dressing, continence care and other routine daily needs. Medical services vary by facility.

Another plus is that living costs are typically less than regular nursing home care. (Approximately 90 percent of the country's assisted living services are paid for with private funds, although some states have adopted Medicaid waiver programs.) Costs vary with the residence, room size, and the types of services needed by the residents. Across the nation, the median monthly rate per resident is \$2,350 (Source: ALFA 2006 Overview of Assisted Living). This is generally less than the cost of home health services and nursing home care.



To sum up, the main benefits of assisted living facilities are:

- Maximum independence
- Freedom from running and maintaining a household
- Lower costs than a nursing home
- A close-knit community, complete with social and recreational activities
- Easy access to health care and needed assistance.

ALF's are a bright option with many advantages. While Dorothy reminded us that there's no place like home, King Solomon taught simply and wisely that there is a time and a place for everything. Moving to an ALF should be put off until the right time, but when that time comes as part of the usual course of Alzheimer's, it is really the right place, combining the best of both worlds, of health and home.

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