

AALHA “Frequently Asked Questions” for Consumers

What is “Assisted Living”?

Assisted Living is the next best option for those who can no longer stay in their homes. While large assisted living communities exist, most AALHA members provide personalized assisted living care in family-style homes. Think of it like renting a room in a house in a regular neighborhood, only the house provides special services and attentive, certified caregivers who assist with activities of daily living, such as bathing, grooming, medication management and other activities, all with loving care in a family atmosphere. Your loved one can still maintain a level of independence, yet his or her quality of life is enhanced by a nurturing, safe, homelike environment.

- **Lifestyle**

- **What is the difference between an assisted living home and a nursing home?**

There is no comparison. Nursing homes may care for 30 or more people, while most assisted living homes average one to five residents, with 10 being the maximum. When medical needs are so critical that 24-hour specialized nursing care is required, specialized care or services can be brought in. Assisted living homes provide most of the same care that can be found at nursing homes, only in a much more personalized, family-style environment.

Many people with age-related diseases and injuries spend years living full lives in assisted living homes. AALHA homes are a type of assisted living and as the elderly person ages, the level of care changes as their needs dictate. As you search for the perfect care home environment for your loved one, keep in mind that each time you move an elderly person, his or her life expectancy is shortened six months by every move. It is important that you find something very comfortable that may be the final home for your loved one.

- **Is this a form of independent living?**

It is similar to independent living in that residents can still maintain a certain level of independence, but compassionate, trained medical professionals assist with activities of daily living. All three levels of care can be provided: supervisory, personal, and directed.

Some people think apartments are assisted living homes because a caregiver may check in on an elderly person or help monitor medication; however, in that scenario, the person is still living independently.

When a person can no longer do all of his or her ADLs (activities of daily living), assisted living homes provide private, stand-by assistance. Your loved one may need help in the shower, getting dressed or some extra support with an activity like cooking. The trained staff at each AALHA care home observes daily when and to what extent assistance is needed. Your loved one maintains his or her lifestyle with dignity while receiving assistance in a safe environment.

- **What type of services will my loved one receive?**

Services are based upon the level of care required according to each individual's care plan. Assisted living homes employ certified caregivers who provide personalized assistance with activities of daily living, such as bathing, grooming, dressing, meal preparation, medication management, laundry, transportation, and other care needs. Some assisted living homes also offer rehabilitative services and specialized care for those with Alzheimer's disease and behavioral disorders.

Most AALHA care homes address behavioral issues. And, if need be, specialists can be brought in to deal with any issue.

One of the wonderful benefits of being an AALHA member is access to a large and supportive network. When you choose an AALHA care home for your loved one, you can rest assured that any extra support that an assisted living homeowner might need is at his or her fingertips.

- **What are the living quarters like?**

Living quarters vary from home to home, but more often than not, you'll find most AALHA member homes are of the same standards you live in or above. Residents are like family members, sharing a kitchen, dining room, and living room. Neighbors of all ages may live on the block where your loved one's home is. And, residents still maintain a level of independence by choosing how they want to spend their time. Some living quarters are private; others are semi-private. If residents desire privacy, they can retreat to their bedrooms for some quiet time; if they wish to socialize, they have plenty of options with other residents, staff, and family members.

Private and semi-private rooms are available by request. More often than not, residents are in the family room, kitchen or another part of the house where they can interact with others and be a part of the family.

- **Are pets allowed?**

Pets are an important part of the family, and some AALHA member homes already have house pets. Others allow visitation from family pets or therapy dogs. Because the decision is up to the homeowner's discretion, it is best to ask this question while you are selecting a home.

- **Can my loved one bring furniture?**

It depends on the home and the homeowner. Some assisted living homes provide furnished bedrooms while others will allow residents to furnish the rooms themselves. Most AALHA member will allow residents to bring their furniture, but there are limits depending on space. Again, it is up to the homeowner's discretion, and it is best to ask this question while selecting a home.

- **How often can relatives and friends visit?**

Relatives and friends are encouraged to visit often! Most AALHA homes are “locked-door care homes with open-door policies” which gives you peace of mind knowing your loved one is safe and you can visit at any time. But out of respect for other residents, it is best to find out if the homeowner has certain rules regarding visiting hours. When choosing a care home for your loved one, find a home that is best suited for your needs.

- **What type of social activities can my loved one participate in?**

Social interaction is vital to leading a full, quality life. According to state regulations, assisted living homes must have an activity calendar. Most AALHA members provide a variety of social activities for residents, ranging from live music, games, and barbecues at the house to shopping sprees, beauty parlor visits, and special excursions to community events. AALHA care homes try to design activities around the residents and include as many residents as possible who are willing to participate.

- **How safe is the neighborhood?**

Safety of all residents is of utmost importance. Many AALHA member homeowners go the extra mile to provide a safe environment in upscale neighborhoods.

State regulations mandate that most assisted living homes be wired into police and fire departments, so it truly is a community looking after its community members. It is best to ask specific questions about security as you go through the selection process.

- **Medical**

- **What is the difference between the care found at an assisted living home and a larger facility?**

Assisted living homes are regulated by the state and follow the same laws that the larger centers do. AALHA member homes provide exceptional, attentive care to their residents in a homelike atmosphere. Because each home limits the amount of residents it can house, certified caregivers get to know each resident’s unique needs and can respond quickly and efficiently. And, most importantly, your loved one will be treated with respect and compassion.

- **What type of training does the staff receive?**

All staff at assisted living homes must be state-certified according to state regulations, and they must keep up with their CEUs every year (continuing education). They are CPR and first aid certified, and they are all fingerprinted and verified by the Department of Public Safety.

- **Does Medicare, Medicaid, or long-term care insurance help pay for assisted living services?**

Assisted living homes in Arizona don't accept Medicare but most AALHA care homes accept Arizona Long Term Care insurance (Medicaid) and private, long-term care insurance.

- **What if my loved one needs emergency care?**

Depending on the medical condition, AALHA members can provide first-aid treatment on-site. For a true emergency, AALHA members will quickly arrange through the 9-1-1 system for paramedics to transport your loved one to the nearest hospital.

- **Are staff members trained to care for residents with Alzheimer's and other behavioral diseases?**

Yes. If your loved one suffers from Alzheimer's or other behavioral issues, you can trust that he or she will receive a high level of care from trained professionals. Caregivers in assisted living homes provide specialized services to care for all residents.

- **My loved one often forgets to take medication. Can staff help dispense and monitor medication?**

Yes, each AALHA member home has certified staff on-site 24 hours a day to assist with medication management according to state regulation. Based upon the Department of Health Services licensing regulations, each resident's doctor must give written orders and instructions regarding the administration of all medications. Medications must be kept locked at all times. AALHA care homes work closely with residents' personal physicians and other visiting doctors to ensure that all state licensing regulations are being met.

- **Financial/Legal**

- **How are assisted living homes regulated?**

Regulations and licensure requirements for assisted living facilities vary from state to state.

Arizona is state regulated by the Department of Health Services. All homes are annually inspected and licensed. The license as well as the care home manager's certificate must be posted in a conspicuous location in the care home.

AALHA members must maintain current licenses and certification issued by the State of Arizona Department of Health Services (DHS), and must adhere to the highest standards of safety, care, and fair and honest business practices. Our members also adhere to AALHA's strict Code of Ethics. And, you can have peace of mind that our care home managers are also regulated by the Nursing Care Institution Administrators.

- **Are criminal records checks done on AALHA member employees?**

Yes! State laws mandate that caregivers are fingerprinted, and this process reveals records of any wrongdoings. AALHA members want the best for their residents and wholeheartedly support this.

Like any profession, there are those who can be trusted and those who can't. Our members adhere to AALHA's strict Code of Ethics and your loved one will receive high-quality, personalized care from compassionate, trained, state-certified caregivers.

- **What if we have a complaint? Who do we talk to?**

It is always best to bring complaints first to your assisted living manager/ homeowner and try to find a solution together. But we at AALHA want to and need to know if you have any serious complaints about our members. Please direct serious complaints to information@aalha.org and our board will address the issue. You can also call 1-888-400-9044.

- **How much will it cost to move in and reside in an assisted living home?**

Each AALHA care home sets its own fees; some homes accept AZ Long Term Care Insurance (ALTC), which can help cover a portion of the monthly fees.

Start by discussing your loved one's needs with the care home manager to determine level of care, which services are necessary, and what options exist. Assisted living home costs vary: \$2,000 - \$3,500 per individual per month while those with additional amenities will run \$3,500 per month and more depending upon level of care required.

- **How does this cost compare to nursing homes and larger facilities?**

Assisted living care homes usually cost less than half the price of nursing homes and larger facilities where the residents pay a la carte for additional services.

- **What legal papers need to be signed?**

According to state regulations, there are contracts and medical records that must be signed prior to admittance. Many times the paperwork requirements can be completed in as little time as one day.

- **What type of wait is there to get into an assisted living home?**

It varies and it depends on whether the need is immediate or a short time in the future. Availability is always based upon each resident's needs. If the need is urgent, there are enough AALHA care homes that there should be one available for your loved one.

- **What happens if my loved one does not like it; can we cancel the contract?**

Yes, you can always cancel, but you and your family should agree to give your loved one time to adjust. There is always an adjustment when anyone moves. According to state regulations, either party has a 30 day notice clause to cancel.

- **What type of insurance policies do assisted living homes have? Will we need to purchase additional insurance for personal property?**

They all have insurance policies. This should be covered with the care manager prior to admittance of the resident.