

Considering Assisted Living?

Some Answers For: When, Where and How?



Explore Your Options

Gather information.

When the thought arrives that you or someone you love may need more help at home to perform personal care, may not have enough support in place even with others helping, or have medical concerns warranting the need for 24 hour care then it is time to start looking at what is available in your community regarding assisted living homes. You can find information:

- On line by searching assisted living homes in your town or nearest you
- You can get a list of assisted living home options from local senior centers
- From hospitals or your doctor
- From a care coordinator
- Or from other human services agencies like us at Alzheimer's Resource of Alaska.

Explore alternatives.

Maybe in-home services can be added or increased or an adult day services program may be enough to fill the gaps and provide safety and security for you or your loved one and still allow for the person to remain at home. Also many senior housing units are equipped with added safety features and even 24 hour staff. Is 24 hour care in your home the right move or is the need for 24 hour care best obtained through use of an assisted living home?

Here are some questions to ask during this exploration:

- Does your loved one want to move?
- What about his/her spouse?
- What support systems are already working well?
- Have you tried local community based services first?
- Is your home equipped to care for the person now and in the future?
- Will someone be there to care for the person when needed?
- How will the move affect other family members and your work?
- Is the person able to travel safely? Is there someone to escort them if needed?
- What local resources are available? Is the person eligible for these resources?
- What kind of medical care is needed? Is insurance an option to cover any of the assistance needed?
- Have you talked with others involved in the person's care?
- Have you considered the severity of the dementia or other illnesses and how this will affect the person's ability to adjust in a new setting?
- Have you talked with other family members to see if they are willing to help with part of the care, or give you breaks?
- Do you have a back-up plan if things don't work out?

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Gain Consensus

Try to involve your loved one and all concerned family members in making the decision. If the parties are not in agreement, it can hinder the person's adjustment to any plan or facility. Provide your family member with opportunity to be involved in the decision-making process; allow him/her to choose care givers, design the room, or view facilities with you if possible.

Acknowledge Feelings

It is crucial to acknowledge whatever feelings the person expresses. Anger and/or sadness are normal reactions to the anticipation of a move and loss of independence. If the person expresses sadness, perhaps crying, join them in sorrow; allow your own tears and give your family member a hug. You may not need to do anything else. If the person expresses anger, e.g. "I don't want to move; I want to stay in my own home," acknowledge these feelings by saying, "I know you don't want to move" or "I know you wish you could stay in your own home." This will help validate his/her feelings. It can be difficult to listen to feelings of anger, especially if they seem directed at you. Remember that sadness and anger are normal and healthy responses. The more your family member is able to express these feelings, the easier the adjustment will be. Allowing and listening to these feelings may help in the transition.

Team It

You can team with a sibling, spouse, other relative, friend, or more than one person. It is too stressful to try to do it all yourself especially if the plan is for assisted living home placement. During the critical few days before the move and the week after, you or the other person may need time away. Other times you'll need the mutual support and presence of being together. Discuss your needs daily, along with the needs of your loved one. Reinforce your successes. Give each other verbal "pats on the back." Recognize your own feelings and feelings of your loved ones, including sadness, frustration, and often exhaustion, both emotional and physical. Do not judge each other's feelings.

Reassure, Redirect and Educate

There are increased considerations when dealing with placement of someone who has dementia. Reassure with statements like "We love you and we'll always be here for you or we'll do everything we can to help make it easier." Reassurance is what the person with memory loss seems to need the most. Redirecting is also affective as shock and intensity of feelings may be great. Both you and your family need time and space. If things are getting tense distract the person with dementia with an activity, a change of room, or food. Just as importantly make sure you, your family members, the person needing placement, and staff at the assisted living home is educated about dementia, the progression of the disease, and the increased needs of people with dementia as they age. The Alzheimer's Resource Agency of Alaska will assist in educating, planning, and assisting anyone involved in assisted living home care just give us a call: