

# Choosing an Assisted Living Facility

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**A**ssisted living is one of the fastest growing types of senior housing in the United States. Assisted living facilities usually provide or coordinate personal care services, 24-hour supervision, scheduled and unscheduled assistance, social activities, and some health-related services. These facilities are designed for individuals who cannot live independently, but do not need nursing care on a daily basis.

Costs vary according to the residence, room size, and types of service needed by the resident. Most assisted living facilities charge month-to-month rates, which are generally paid by the residents or by their families from their own financial resources; however, Medicaid and some long-term care insurances might cover some or all of this type of care. Wartime veterans and their spouses may qualify for VA Aid and Attendance Pension based upon income and assets versus the cost of care.

If you decide that an assisted living facility is the best option for you or a family member, the Better Business Bureau suggests the following tips:

- Visit several facilities and talk to the staff, residents and family members who have loved ones in the facility, preferably twice at each facility (once during the week and once on the weekend or evenings. Ask yourself these questions: Is the facility close enough for family and friends to visit conveniently? Does the atmosphere seem pleasant? Does there appear to be enough staff available? Do the residents and staff seem happy and engaged? Do the residents appear to be clean and well groomed? Is the facility clean and well maintained?
- Check licensing as well as complaints filed with your local Department on Human Services and also check the facility's most recent inspection reports.
- Visit [www.longtermcare.gov](http://www.longtermcare.gov) for information and resources about long term care needs for themselves or a family member.
- Check the facility for safety features including well-lit stairs and halls,

handrails in the bathrooms, well-marked exits and a way to call for help if needed.

- Know what the daily or monthly rates are and what is included in this fee. There may be other services available for an extra charge. Find out if the services are provided by the facility's staff or if arrangements are made with other agencies.
- If applicable, find out if the facility accepts Medicaid and your long-term care insurance. Also ask if the facility is Medicaid certified.
- What choices of accommodations are available? Can you get a private room? Do they have rooms with kitchen facilities? Is the bathroom private or shared? Are there private areas other than the bedroom for visits? Is there enough space for personal belongings?
- Find out how you or your family will be involved in any future care planning processes. Be sure you know what will happen if you should need skilled care later on. Will you have to move, or will the facility be able to provide the care you need?
- Be sure to check the facility's business review with the Better Business Bureau.

This transition can be daunting but knowing where to begin and what questions to ask can help make the process much more manageable.

For more tips you can trust, visit [www.bbb.org](http://www.bbb.org).

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***Kelvin Collins is president & CEO of the Better Business Bureau serving the Fall Line Corridor, serving 77 counties in East Alabama, West Georgia, Southwest Georgia, Central Georgia, East Georgia and Western South Carolina. This tips column is provided through the local BBB and the International Association of Better Business Bureaus (IABBB). The Better Business Bureau sets standards for ethical business behavior, monitors compliance and helps consumers identify trustworthy businesses. Questions or complaints about a specific company or charity should be referred directly to the BBB at Phone: 1-800-763-4222, Web site: BBB.org or E-mail: info@centralgeorgia.bbb.org.***

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