

What to Look for in an Assisted Living Community for Seniors with Disabilities

Assisted living communities offer many amenities, making them an attractive option for senior living. If you have a disability, it's important to visit several communities to find one that can accommodate your needs. Take this checklist with you on each visit to find out what services and amenities are available for residents with disabilities.

Activity Options

- Does the community offer modified activities for residents with limited mobility?
- Are there activities you can participate in if you use a wheelchair, walker or other mobility aid?
- If the community offers transportation to off-site activities, are staff members available to accompany residents who need assistance?

Building Layout

- Does each building have wide hallways to accommodate residents with wheelchairs and walkers?
- Are there alarms or other security features in case you fall or need help with an assistive device?
- Do the common areas have comfortable furniture to support residents with disabilities that cause chronic pain?
- Are the walkways free of objects that could block a wheelchair or other mobility aid?
- Does the community have plenty of handrails to make it safer for residents with disabilities to move around?
- If the community has a dining room, are the tables designed to accommodate residents who use wheelchairs?

Memory Care

- Does the community offer a memory care program for residents with dementia?
- Are staff members trained to work with residents who have cognitive impairments?
- Does the community have security features designed to protect residents with dementia, such as keypad entry or emergency alert systems?

Private Living Spaces

- Do the bathrooms have automatic lights to prevent residents who use wheelchairs from having to stretch to reach wall switches?
- If the bathrooms don't have automatic lights, do the wall switches have pull chains to make it easier for residents who use wheelchairs to operate them?
- Do resident rooms or apartments have emergency call buttons to request staff assistance?

Staffing

- Are staff members trained on how to assist residents who use wheelchairs and other mobility aids?
- Does the community offer continuing education classes on disability awareness and inclusion? If not, does it require staff members to take off-site classes on these topics?
- Do staff members receive training on how to recognize signs indicating that a resident's disability is getting worse?
- Does the community have low staff-to-resident ratios?

Therapeutic Services

- Does the community offer physical therapy, occupational therapy or other services to help residents with disabilities maintain the highest possible level of functioning?
- If the community doesn't offer on-site therapies, is transportation available to off-site service providers?
- Are there any licensed health care professionals on staff to address changes in a resident's health?