

Moving Into An Assisted Living Residence: Making A Successful Transition

A Guide For New Residents & Families

You have made the decision to move into an assisted living residence. Yet you still have many questions. Do I really need the help? Will I make new friends? Will I receive help when I need it? Will I continue to see my family and friends?

While all these questions are common, the answer to all of them is the same—Yes! You can make new friends, you can receive the personal assistance you need, and you can continue to see your family and friends.

Change can be challenging. The time it takes to transition is different for everyone. The keys to success are preparation, a positive attitude, a supportive network of family and friends, along with patience and understanding—all will prepare you for a smooth transition.

Privacy Concerns

One of the biggest differences between living in your own home and assisted living is the number of people under one roof. You will have the opportunity to be around your contemporaries and make new friends. However, that doesn't mean you will lose your privacy. Your apartment is your space. Friends and family can visit you, but you determine when. You may want to request a key to your apartment for added privacy and security.

What To Bring To Your New Home

Soon after selecting a facility, residents say to begin planning for your move, including deciding which personal items such as furniture, keepsakes, and photographs to move.

Based upon their personal experiences, many residents suggest you see the actual apartment or unit that you will move into and take measurements. Ask the administrator or director what furniture, if any, the residence will provide. Some residences may provide minimal furniture, such as a bed or chair upon request; other residences encourage you to bring whatever furnishings will make you feel comfortable in your new home. Experience indicates that making choices about personal possessions is difficult at the time; however, one resident said, "It's not as bad as you think . . . Try to remain positive and have family and friends help you."

Residents suggest that you might want to leave large pieces of furniture at home, since your apartment will probably be smaller than your current home. They also

suggest that you bring smaller prized possessions to create that “at-home” feeling in your new assisted living apartment. And, for those possessions that you can’t part with but aren’t sure that you want to bring with you, consider putting those items in a storage unit or asking family to temporarily store the items for you. This way you will have time to determine which items are important to have with you at your new home.

You should start packing well in advance of the actual move. Sort through your clothes and decide what you will need and how much your new closets will hold. Residents advise to be sure to look at available closet and storage space to avoid bringing more than the closets can hold. Avoid bringing too many of one thing such as coats.

Moving Day Helpers

When moving day arrives and you are ready to set up your new home, ask family and friends to help arrange and organize your apartment. Many assisted living residences have staff members who can help move your furniture and other heavy pieces into your new apartment. You will want to find out what assistance the residence offers before you arrive on moving day. Although staff, family members, and friends are there to help you, it is important that you decide how your apartment is arranged. Remember, arranging your apartment to suit your preferences will make your adjustment easier.

Making the Emotional Transition

Moving is hard. It can make anyone feel overwhelmed and stressed. However, these feelings are generally temporary and disappear after you establish your own routine. “Give it time and you will adjust,” said one resident. In talking with other residents, you will find many of them felt the same way. Some residents found comfort in talking with clergy. Others found comfort in talking to a neighbor or close friend.

Residents say the best strategy is to stay busy, introduce yourself to other residents, and participate in the activities. It is normal to have a tendency to stay in your apartment at first. Yet, getting out and meeting other residents as well as participating in activities were repeatedly identified as the quickest ways to become comfortable with your new surroundings.

Everyone is different. Some people embrace the move with open arms, while for others it may not be as easy. Whatever your feelings, current residents say these feelings are normal. Give yourself time to adjust. If you feel you are taking longer to adjust than what you consider normal, then you might benefit from discussing your concerns and feelings with the administrator or director of the residence.

More Advice For New Residents

- Read all the materials about the assisted living residence before you move in.
- Try and meet the administrator or director and staff before moving day.
- Review the paperwork and contract before you move in so that your questions can be answered in advance.
- Pack wisely. Don't bring everything.
- Obtain a list from the residence of suggested items to bring.
- Obtain a list of residence policies and familiarize yourself with them.
- Label your clothing if the residence is helping you with laundry.
- Read the activity schedule and choose two or three programs to attend early on to meet your neighbors and other residents.

Advice for Friends and Family Members

Current residents advise friends and family members to be involved before, during, and after the move. Your loved one does not want to be seen or treated differently now that they live in an assisted living residence. Remember, your family member or friend hasn't changed; it's only their home address that has changed.

Be aware. Family members and close friends often experience the same emotions as a new resident. These emotions are natural and to be expected.

Suggested Do's For Friends and Relatives

- If requested, help with the sorting, packing, and moving.
- Listen as your loved one talks about what they left behind.
- Be helpful even if you do not agree with the decision to move.
- Recognize that moving to a new home represents a major change.
- Call and visit often during the first few weeks.
- Be positive. A smile, support, patience, and understanding are required.

Suggested Don'ts for Friends and Relatives

- Make all the decisions or take over the sorting, packing, and moving process.
- Focus only on yourselves. This is about the resident moving, not you!
- Criticize the decision to move into assisted living.
- Make light of the transition.
- Immediately talk about selling the resident's house.
- Make promises that you cannot keep.
- Be negative.

Final Thoughts

Everyone copes differently with change based on his or her own personality, life experiences, and circumstances. Patience, support, and understanding are key themes that residents say helped them, their families, and friends with transitioning into assisted living.

Rest assured that the assisted living staff is experienced, ready, and willing to assist you with your move. Don't be shy about asking questions or seeking assistance. It is each assisted living residence's goal that your move is a positive experience for you.

About This Brochure

The National Center for Assisted Living® (NCAL) members from across the country asked their residents a series of questions designed to find out what was helpful and not helpful during their move into an assisted living residence. Their cumulative advice is contained in this brochure that includes topics such as, discussions about resident's privacy, what personal belongings to bring, asking relatives or friends to help on moving day, recommendations for family and friends, and suggestions on how to deal with the emotions of moving.

The NCAL Consumer Relations Committee created this brochure to make moving into an assisted living residence a pleasant experience for residents and families.

People who are preparing for a move into an assisted living or residential care facility have many questions. NCAL wanted to help answer these questions by seeking advice from the nation's top experts on the subject—assisted living residents who have made the move and currently live in assisted living.

The guidance is meant to address the common concerns and questions new residents and their families have when they are preparing for their move. NCAL is pleased to share the sound advice of current residents with individuals who are about to call an assisted living or residential care facility their home.

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