

7 Questions to Ask Before Choosing Assisted Living

A Complete Guide for Families in North Texas

Presented by Grand Pleasantville Assisted Living

Midlothian, Texas

Dear Family,

If you're reading this guide, you're likely facing one of the most difficult decisions of your life: finding the right assisted living community for someone you love.

You're probably feeling overwhelmed, guilty, confused, and exhausted. You might be asking yourself: Am I making the right choice? Will my parent hate me? Can we even afford this?

These feelings are completely normal. And we want you to know: you're not alone.

This guide will walk you through the 7 most important questions to ask when choosing an assisted living community, so you can make a confident, informed decision that's right for your family.

Understanding Assisted Living

What Is Assisted Living?

Assisted living is a residential care option designed for older adults who need help with daily activities but don't require the intensive medical care provided in a nursing home. It bridges the gap between independent living and skilled nursing care.

What Services Are Typically Included?

Most assisted living communities provide:

- 24-hour staff supervision and emergency response
- Assistance with daily activities (bathing, dressing, medication management)
- Three nutritious meals daily plus snacks
- Housekeeping and laundry services
- Social activities and recreational programs
- Transportation to medical appointments and errands
- Memory care options for those with Alzheimer's or dementia

Signs It May Be Time for Assisted Living

- Multiple falls or mobility issues
- Forgetting to take medications
- Difficulty with personal hygiene or grooming
- Unexplained weight loss or spoiled food in the refrigerator
- Social isolation or depression
- Home safety concerns (stove left on, doors left unlocked)
- Caregiver burnout in family members

The 7 Essential Questions

Question 1: What Level of Care Does Your Loved One Need?

Before touring any community, assess your loved one's current and anticipated needs. This will help you find a facility that can grow with them over time.

Key Considerations:

- What daily activities require assistance? (bathing, dressing, toileting, eating, mobility)
- Are there any medical conditions that require specialized care?
- Is memory care needed now or potentially in the future?
- How many medications need to be managed?

Questions to Ask the Community:

- ✓ What is your staff-to-resident ratio?
- ✓ Do you have registered nurses on staff 24/7?
- ✓ How do you handle medication management?
- ✓ Can you accommodate changes in care needs without requiring a move?

Question 2: What Are the True Costs and What's Included?

Understanding the full financial picture is crucial. Assisted living costs in Texas typically range from \$3,500 to \$6,000 per month, but this varies significantly based on location, services, and level of care.

What's Typically Included in Base Cost:

- Private or shared living accommodations
- Three meals daily and snacks
- Housekeeping and laundry
- Basic personal care assistance
- Social and recreational activities

Potential Additional Costs:

- Higher level of care fees (tiered pricing based on assistance needed)
- Memory care services
- Beauty salon and barber services
- Cable TV, phone, and internet
- Pet care fees
- Move-in fees or community fees

Questions to Ask:

- ✓ Can you provide a detailed, itemized list of all costs?
- ✓ How often do rates increase, and by how much historically?
- ✓ What happens if my loved one runs out of money?
- ✓ Do you accept Medicaid or long-term care insurance?
- ✓ Are there any veterans' benefits or financial assistance programs available?
- ✓ What is your refund policy if my loved one needs to leave?

Question 3: What Does Daily Life Actually Look Like?

Your loved one will be living here every day. Understanding the daily routine, meal quality, and activities is essential to ensuring they'll be happy and engaged.

Questions to Ask:

- ✓ Can I see a sample menu for the week? Can you accommodate special diets?
- ✓ What is a typical daily schedule?
- ✓ How many activities and social programs do you offer weekly?
- ✓ Are activities meaningful, or just time-fillers?
- ✓ Can residents maintain their own schedules and routines?
- ✓ What happens on weekends and evenings?
- ✓ Can I stay for lunch to sample the food?

Red Flags to Watch For:

- Residents sitting alone in wheelchairs in hallways
- No activities happening during your visit
- Staff seems rushed or unengaged with residents
- Limited dining options or poor food presentation

Question 4: What Is the Quality and Training of Staff?

The staff will be interacting with your loved one daily. Their training, attitude, and turnover rate are critical factors in the quality of care.

Questions to Ask:

- ✓ What training do caregivers receive, and how often?
- ✓ Are background checks conducted on all staff?
- ✓ What is your staff turnover rate?
- ✓ How do you handle staff shortages or sick days?
- ✓ Is there a registered nurse on-site, and during what hours?
- ✓ How long has the director been in this position?

Observe During Your Visit:

- Do staff members greet residents by name?
- Are interactions warm and respectful?
- Does staff seem rushed or stressed?
- Are call buttons answered promptly?

Question 5: How Is Safety and Security Handled?

Your loved one's safety should be the top priority. This includes physical safety, emergency preparedness, and security measures.

Questions to Ask:

- ✓ What emergency response systems are in place?
- ✓ How do you handle falls or medical emergencies?
- ✓ Is the building equipped with sprinklers and fire safety systems?
- ✓ What security measures prevent residents from wandering (especially important for memory care)?
- ✓ How do you screen visitors and monitor who enters the building?
- ✓ What is your infection control protocol?
- ✓ Have there been any recent health department violations?

Safety Checklist:

- Well-lit hallways and common areas
- Handrails and grab bars throughout
- Non-slip flooring
- Wide doorways for wheelchair access
- Emergency call buttons in rooms and bathrooms

Question 6: What Is the Community's Reputation and Track Record?

Research is essential. A community might look beautiful during a tour, but what do current residents and families actually say?

How to Research:

- Read online reviews on Google, Facebook, and senior living websites
- Check the Texas Health and Human Services website for inspection reports
- Ask for references from current residents' families
- Talk to the local Area Agency on Aging
- Visit unannounced at different times of day

Questions to Ask Current Families:

- ✓ How responsive is management to concerns?
- ✓ Has your loved one's quality of life improved since moving here?
- ✓ Would you choose this community again?
- ✓ What surprised you (positively or negatively) after moving in?

Question 7: How Will You Stay Connected and Involved?

Your relationship with your loved one doesn't end when they move to assisted living. In fact, family involvement is crucial to their happiness and wellbeing.

Questions to Ask:

- ✓ What are your visiting hours? Can family visit anytime?
- ✓ Can family members join residents for meals?
- ✓ How do you communicate with families about care and changes?
- ✓ Is there a family council or regular family meetings?
- ✓ Can we take our loved one out for visits, errands, or events?
- ✓ How do you handle family concerns or complaints?

Ways to Stay Involved:

- Schedule regular visits at different times of day
- Attend community events and activities
- Join family councils or volunteer opportunities
- Maintain phone or video call routines
- Bring favorite foods, photos, or items from home

Paying for Assisted Living

One of the biggest concerns families have is affordability. Here are the most common ways to pay for assisted living:

Private Pay (Personal Savings and Assets)

Most families use personal savings, retirement accounts, pensions, Social Security, or proceeds from selling a home. This is the most common payment method.

Long-Term Care Insurance

If your loved one purchased long-term care insurance, it may cover part or all of assisted living costs. Review the policy carefully to understand coverage limits and requirements.

Veterans Benefits

Veterans or their surviving spouses may qualify for Aid and Attendance benefits, which can provide up to \$2,295 per month (2024 rates) to help cover assisted living costs.

Medicaid (Limited in Texas)

Texas Medicaid does not typically cover assisted living, but some communities participate in waiver programs for individuals with specific needs. Ask communities if they accept Medicaid waivers.

Life Insurance Policies

Some families use life settlements or accelerated death benefits from life insurance policies to fund assisted living care.

Reverse Mortgages

A reverse mortgage allows homeowners 62+ to convert home equity into cash without selling, which can be used for assisted living expenses.

Having 'The Conversation' with Your Loved One

One of the hardest parts of this process is starting the conversation about moving to assisted living. Here are some tips:

1. Start Early and Often

Don't wait until a crisis. Begin discussing future care needs before it becomes urgent.

2. Focus on Benefits, Not Losses

Instead of focusing on what they'll give up, emphasize what they'll gain: safety, social connections, quality meals, freedom from home maintenance, and peace of mind for the family.

3. Involve Them in the Decision

Tour communities together. Let them express preferences and concerns. The more control they feel they have, the easier the transition will be.

4. Use Third-Party Support

Sometimes a doctor, social worker, or trusted friend can help advocate for the move when family members face resistance.

5. Be Patient and Compassionate

This is a major life change. Give your loved one time to process, grieve, and adjust. It's normal for them to feel scared, angry, or sad.

Your Complete Tour Checklist

Use this checklist when visiting assisted living communities:

First Impressions

- ✓ Is the building clean, well-maintained, and free of odors?
- ✓ Is the atmosphere warm and welcoming?
- ✓ Are residents engaged and happy?

Living Spaces

- ✓ Are rooms spacious and private?
- ✓ Do rooms have private bathrooms?
- ✓ Can residents bring their own furniture?
- ✓ Is there adequate natural light and ventilation?

Dining

- ✓ Is the dining room attractive and inviting?
- ✓ Are meals served at flexible times?
- ✓ Can you sample a meal during your tour?
- ✓ Are special dietary needs accommodated?

Activities and Socialization

- ✓ Is there a monthly activities calendar?
- ✓ Are activities varied and engaging?
- ✓ Are there opportunities for outings and field trips?
- ✓ Do residents seem genuinely engaged during activities?

Staff and Care

- ✓ Are staff friendly, patient, and respectful?
- ✓ Do staff call residents by name?
- ✓ Is there adequate staff visible during your visit?
- ✓ Can you speak with the director of nursing?

Red Flags: When to Walk Away

Not all assisted living communities are created equal. Watch for these warning signs:

- **Management refuses to provide detailed cost information or pricing is vague**
- **The facility is dirty, smells bad, or is poorly maintained**
- **Residents appear unhappy, neglected, or unkempt**
- **Staff is dismissive, rude, or unresponsive to questions**
- **There are numerous negative online reviews mentioning the same issues**
- **Recent health department violations are serious or unresolved**
- **Management pressures you to sign immediately without time to consider**
- **You're not allowed to visit unannounced or at different times**
- **High staff turnover is evident or admitted**
- **The contract contains hidden fees or unclear terms**

Trust your instincts. If something feels wrong, it probably is.

Making the Final Decision

After touring communities and gathering information, it's time to make your choice. Here's how to approach the final decision:

1. Compare Your Top 2-3 Options

Create a comparison chart with costs, services, pros and cons for each community.

2. Revisit Your Top Choice

Schedule a second visit, preferably unannounced, at a different time of day (evening or weekend) to see the community in a different light.

3. Have Your Loved One Visit (If Possible)

If your loved one is cognitively able, involve them in a final visit. Let them meet potential neighbors and imagine themselves living there.

4. Review the Contract Carefully

Have an attorney or trusted advisor review the residency agreement before signing. Pay special attention to refund policies and what happens if care needs change.

5. Trust Your Gut

After all the research, your instincts matter. Choose the community where you can truly envision your loved one being happy and thriving.

A Final Word: You're Making the Right Choice

If you're reading this guide, it means you care deeply about your loved one's wellbeing. You're researching, asking questions, and making thoughtful decisions.

Choosing assisted living doesn't mean you're giving up or abandoning your parent. It means you're ensuring they receive the professional care, safety, and social engagement they deserve—while also protecting your own health and wellbeing so you can continue to be there for them.

Many families report that after the initial adjustment period, their loved ones are happier, healthier, and more engaged than they were living at home. And family relationships often improve because you can focus on being a son or daughter again, not a caregiver.

This is one of the hardest decisions you'll ever make. But it's also one of the most loving.

About Grand Pleasantville Assisted Living

Grand Pleasantville Assisted Living is Midlothian's newest senior living community, dedicated to providing compassionate, personalized care in a warm, home-like environment.

What Sets Us Apart:

- **24/7 licensed nursing staff and trained caregivers**
- **Specialized memory care neighborhood for Alzheimer's and dementia**
- **Dedicated Medicare Insurance Agent**
- **Chef-prepared, restaurant-style meals**
- **Engaging activities tailored to residents' interests and abilities**
- **Beautiful, modern facility with private suites and spacious common areas**
- **Respite care available for short-term stays**
- **Transportation to medical appointments and local outings**

We invite you to schedule a personal tour and see the Grand Pleasantville difference for yourself.

Schedule Your Tour Today

Grand Pleasantville Assisted Living

Midlothian, Texas

Phone: 855-678-0073

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Because your family deserves the very best.