

Assisted Living Consumer Checklist

Getting started. Call several assisted living programs and ask the manager or administrator for the following questions to help narrow your search. If you do not like the answers to these questions it may save you a visit.

Where to Begin	Yes	No	Comments
What is the size of your program? (How many units? How many beds?)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
What types of living units are currently available?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
If none, do you have a waiting list?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
What is your monthly fee? Do you charge any additional fees for the common areas or are these fees included in the monthly unit cost? Are any such fees refunded if I move?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Do you require a deposit?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Does the provider participate in the Medicaid waiver program?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
What services are provided?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
What services are included in the monthly fees?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
What services are extra? Do you provide the services or do you contract with an outside agency to provide services? If so, who?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Can I choose my own home health provider, or am I required to use the facility's provider?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Is staff on-site at all times?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Where to Begin	Yes	No	Comments
What level of training do the direct care workers possess? What are the qualifications of the program administrator and what experience do they have?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Do you have a fulltime nurse? Is the nurse an RN or an LPN?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Who dispenses medication? What are their qualifications?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Do you pay referral fees to outside agencies? If so, who?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Judging Quality. Assisted living programs are required to be inspected by DIA every other year. The monitoring reports of assisted living programs can be accessed by the program or through the Department of Inspections and Appeals (DIA). You may find it useful to obtain copies of these reports before you go on your visit. The programs must provide them to you upon your request. To retrieve a previous monitoring report, visit the [DIA website](https://dia-hfd.iowa.gov/DIA_HFD/Home.do) at: https://dia-hfd.iowa.gov/DIA_HFD/Home.do. Click on “Entity Search” and type in the name of the facility to view these reports. You may also reach the DIA at **1-515-281-4115**. You may wish to receive more reports than the most recent (i.e., the last three) to establish a program history.

Quality Inspection	Yes	No	Comments
How recent was the provider inspected?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Were any violations found? If so, what were they?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Have the problems been corrected? Does the administrator have any comment on identified violations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

The Long-Term Care (LTC) Ombudsman Program may also have information about whether the program has received complaints and how those complaints were resolved. You may reach the Ombudsman’s Office by calling **1-866-236-1430**. The tenant advocate (LTC Ombudsman) is also available to answer questions and to provide consumer information.

Review Documents. Assisted living programs are required by law to provide copies of the occupancy agreement upon request. If you do not already have them by the time you visit, be sure to get a copy of the:

Documents Obtained	Yes	No	Comments
Occupancy Agreement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Documents Obtained	Yes	No	Comments
List of services offered	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
List of all costs and fees	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Any other documents to sign at admission	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Costs and Occupancy Agreement. This is the document that will determine how much you will pay to the Assisted Living Program, what services you will be paying for and other issues related to occupancy. If you have not received a copy of the Occupancy Agreement before you visit, you may request a copy of the document during the visit. With a copy in-hand, be sure to take this opportunity to follow-up on the questions below and any other questions you may have. In Iowa, landlord tenant law does apply to assisted living programs.

Occupancy Agreement	Yes	No	Comments
Is the print large enough to read?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
What services are provided for the basic fee?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Is there a refund policy in case of transfers, discharges, changes in ownership, or closing?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
When will any refunds be paid?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
What behaviors, conditions, or other circumstances can result in termination of services?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
What type of living unit will I have?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
What are the rights of the tenant?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
What is the provider's grievance procedure?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
What is the provider's policy on relocating tenants in the program? If they become Medicaid eligible?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
If I am away from the program for a period of time (visiting family, in a hospital) do any fees stop?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Occupancy Agreement	Yes	No	Comments
What are the criteria to hold a unit during an extended absence? Is there a charge?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
How long will you hold a unit for me? (Tenant Landlord Law applies)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
When, how often, and why can the fees be changed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
When fees are changed, who is informed, and how?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
How much advanced warning is provided of fee changes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
When and for what reason may a member of the provider's staff enter my unit?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
How are damages to the unit assessed and charged?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
If I choose not to follow my doctor's orders, will this be counted against me?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Personal and Health Related Care. Take into consideration that you may need more care in the future than you need now. Assisted living is intended as only a temporary level of care until you exceed the services they are able to provide. In any event, you will want to ask the questions below.

Meeting Individual Needs	Yes	No	Comments
How often will my level of care be reassessed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
How will the provider meet my current care needs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
What happens if my needs change (I need more help, becoming incontinent, become confused)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
How does the provider tailor schedules for preferences or tenants (like bathing or walking times)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
How does the provider help tenants maintain their abilities to toilet, dress, & eat?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Is there a schedule for staff to check on each tenant's whereabouts and well-being?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Meeting Individual Needs	Yes	No	Comments
What resources does the provider have to address difficult behavior?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are bedrooms, hallways, doorways, bathrooms, and common areas fully accessible to people with walkers or wheelchairs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
If rooms are shared, what does the provider do if there are problems between roommates?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Is there a client council?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
How does the program solicit consumer satisfaction?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Service Plan. It is very important that you or your legal representative clearly understand what is involved in your service plan as it specifies precisely what services you will get, when you will get them, and how. Your service plan should include your identified needs, your requests for assistance and your expected outcomes as well as who will provide the services.

Written Service Plan	Yes	No	Comments
What professionals/staff will be involved in the development of my written service plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
How often is the plan revised?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
How will my family or others I choose be involved?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
What involvement does a confused tenant have?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
What happens if I do not agree with the service plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Staffing. Staff must be trained to meet your identified needs at all times. A key indicator of a quality Assisted Living Program is trained and competent staff.

Staffing	Yes	No	Comments
How many staff are there for each shift?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
What are their responsibilities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Staffing	Yes	No	Comments
What is the training/certification of the people who care for tenants?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Is there direct care staff fluent in my native language?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
How often is an RN or LPN onsite?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Is there special training for staff about dementia and Alzheimer's disease?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
How are staff trained to deal with aggressive individuals?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
How are staff trained to deal with confused individuals who may wander?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
What if I do not like the staff person assigned to me?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
What is the staff turnover rate? How long has the administrator been in this position?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Management of Medications. You may manage your own medications unless your physician's prescription states otherwise, or you may delegate the program to administer your medication. This should be specified in the occupancy agreement and your service plan as some programs may charge for this service.

Medications	Yes	No	Comments
What safeguards are in place to ensure I get the appropriate medications on time and in the correct dosage? How is this documented?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Who is responsible for having prescriptions filled?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Who administers medications?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
If not a nurse, how are staff trained and supervised when administering medications?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
If I delegate the administration of medication, what is the fee?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Medications	Yes	No	Comments
Does the program need to know about my medications if I administer them myself?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
May a family member administer medications?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Under what conditions would the program insist that I delegate the administration of medications?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Transportation. Assisted living programs vary in how accessible transportation may be to tenants.

Transportation	Yes	No	Comments
Is any transportation provided?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
If so, how often (daily, weekly, evenings, weekends?)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Is transportation wheelchair accessible?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
To where is the transportation provided (grocery stores, shopping malls, medical appointments)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Will the provider call and arrange for transportation it does not provide? Is there a fee for this?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Is transportation available if I want to go to an event by myself or with a friend?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are there fees for using the provider's transportation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Activities. Look at a monthly activity schedule to see if the activities appeal to you. Inquire about the following:

Activities and Socializing	Yes	No	Comments
How often are activities in the community scheduled?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Will staff attend with me?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are there protected or enclosed walking areas for tenants?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Activities and Socializing	Yes	No	Comments
Does programming provide opportunities for a variety of interest types and levels of involvement?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Who develops and supervises recreational activities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
How often is an activities schedule provided to me and how far in advance is this schedule provided?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
How do tenants have input into the activities offered?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Is there a pet policy?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Is there a visitor policy?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Meals. A great way to check out the food offered by the program is to sample a meal during your visit. Questions to ask include the following:

Dining	Yes	No	Comments
What times are meals served?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
What happens if I am late, miss a meal, or decline a meal?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
How will any special dietary needs I have be met?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
When can I have a tray delivered to my room?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Is there an additional charge for tray service?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
If I do not like a meal, what are the alternatives?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
When are snacks available?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
May I see the printed menu for the past month?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
How do you make sure each tenant is taking in adequate nutrition?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Dining	Yes	No	Comments
Does a dietician review the menus?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
How do you charge for meals? Is there a refund if I miss a meal?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Housekeeping and Laundry	Yes	No	Comments
How often will my unit be cleaned?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Can I choose to clean my own unit?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
How often will my linens be changed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Will the provider do my personal laundry?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are washing machines & dryers available for me to use at the program?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
If so, is there any cost to use them?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Life Safety & Choice. Assisted living providers emphasize independence and choice. They also have rules and procedures designed to protect tenants from harm. It is important to match your ability with the extent of choices and opportunities offered by a provider, as well as the limitation it will impose upon you.

Safety & Emergencies	Yes	No	Comments
What safety measures are in place to protect tenant's personal property from being stolen?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
What safety measures are in place to protect tenants from wandering away?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are exit doors alarmed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are the floor coverings made of nonskid material?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Is there a fire emergency plan? Are the staff trained in the plan and able to articulate/execute the plan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Safety & Emergencies	Yes	No	Comments
What are the safety arrangements for people in wheelchairs or others who need assistance to escape in case of fire or other emergency?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
How often are there fire drills?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
How do tenants with limited mobility participate in fire drills?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Are emergency plans publicly displayed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
What kind of emergencies are staff expected to handle and how are they trained for them?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Who decides whether to call 911? May I have a copy of any written policies about how that decision is made?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Will my family or legal representative be notified immediately if 911 is called? If there is a fire or other natural disaster, where will tenants be temporarily located?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Self-direction. Assisted living programs include encouragement of family involvement, tenant self-direction, and tenant participation in decisions that emphasize choice, dignity, privacy, individuality, shared risk, and independence.

Individual Choice	Yes	No	Comments
What if I want an exception to a policy, e.g., smoking, or eating foods that are not on a prescribed diet?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Is there a policy on smoking?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Will the provider require that I participate in any particular activity or program?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Does the program require a signed statement on managed (or negotiated) risk?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Managed Risk Consensus Agreement: The Iowa Administrative Rules require every assisted living program have a managed risk policy. The assisted living program is required to provide the managed

risk policy to the tenant along with the occupancy agreement. The managed risk policy shall include the following:

- 1) An acknowledgement of the shared responsibility for identifying and meeting the needs of the tenant and the process for managing risk and for upholding tenant autonomy when tenant decision-making results in poor outcomes for the tenant or others; and
- 2) A consensus-based process to address specific risk situations. Program staff and the tenant shall participate in the process. The result of the consensus-based process may be a managed risk consensus agreement. The managed risk consensus agreement shall include the signature of the tenant and the signatures of all others who participated in the process. The managed risk consensus agreement shall be included in the tenant’s file.

Involuntary Discharge. The occupancy agreement must explain the circumstances under which the assisted living program may discharge you. This is referred to as an involuntary transfer. The answers to the following questions will help you clarify an assisted living program’s ability to care for people with health and behavior conditions that can be difficult to manage. It will also help you determine if you have recourse if you are asked to leave. In the event of an involuntary discharge, the Long-Term Care Ombudsman is a valuable resource and may be reached at **1-866-236-1430**.

Involuntary Transfers	Yes	No	Comments
What are the possible reasons for discharge?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Is there an appeal process?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
What is it?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
How many days’ notice is given and to whom? (Tenant Landlord Law applies)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Is there a refund if there is an involuntary discharge?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
May a waiver be obtained to prevent a transfer or discharge? If so, what is the process?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
What happens if I’m not able to find alternate placement by the discharge date?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Dementia Units. This section is directed to legal representatives, family members or other interested persons because it would be unusual for the person who needs a special care unit to be asking these questions.

Dementia Care	Yes	No	Comments
Is there a separate area specifically for people experiencing dementia?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
How do services in the dementia unit differ from services in the rest of the assisted living program?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
What is the difference in staff training?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
What is the staff-to-tenant ratio?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Is there a special outdoor area for tenants with dementia to use? How is it secured?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
What techniques do you use to ensure that the tenant is getting proper nutrition?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Do you offer decaffeinated drinks throughout the day?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Does the calendar of activities look appropriate for the tenant?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
What is the provider's policy on restraints, both chemical and physical?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
How much space is there to walk around on the unit?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
What is the cost difference between special care and regular units?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	