

## Pick the Right Supportive or Assisted Living Program by Asking These Questions

Finding the right supportive or assisted living program for you or your loved one can be an overwhelming experience. With so many housing options to choose from, it's difficult to know which one will be the best place to call home.

In addition to learning about the basic features of each building (such as location, cleanliness, atmosphere, living spaces, food and friendliness of staff), there are some less obvious questions that will be helpful in determining the quality of care and life that is provided.

Below are five questions that are critical to ask before choosing a new place to live.

### 1. Will the building accept your preferred method of payment?

Supportive and assisted living programs are quite similar in nature, but have one glaring difference that may determine whether or not you are able to reside there: **supportive living programs accept Medicaid; assisted living programs do not.**

A supportive living program will allow you to use both private pay and Medicaid to fund your stay. If you run out of private funding, you may then apply for Medicaid to pay for your residence. As long as care needs can be met, you won't need to move.

An assisted living program does not accept Medicaid as a form of payment.

One of the first things you should learn about any program should be what payment methods are accepted. Don't waste time researching programs that don't meet your requirements.

### 2. What additional services does the facility provide?

While you may only be interested in finding a certain of program now, there may be a time in the future when you or your loved one needs other services. The most useful programs are part of a network of senior care services that provide care and support in a variety of ways.

For example, [Chicagoland Methodist Senior Services](#) offers different programs and services (including those specifically for people with dementia as well as home care, rehabilitation services, adult day care program, subsidized housing, home repair and even computer classes.) This variety of services not only shows a dedication to helping seniors, but makes finding and accessing other types of support simpler.

### 3. What is the priority of the facility?

While we'd hope that the goal of every supportive and assisted living program was to provide a safe, comfortable and happy living environment for every resident, there are many that have other priorities.

Unfortunately, many facilities focus more on the business aspect of their residences than on helping their clients. While there is no easy way to quickly tell which facilities truly prioritize their residents, one criteria that can help you get a better sense of their priorities is **whether they are nonprofit or for profit**.

While for-profit programs are typically looking to earn as much revenue as possible in order to satisfy shareholders, a non-profit program is more likely to be reinvesting its revenue in its staff and programs. A nonprofit program doesn't have shareholders to think about during every move they make; instead, they can make financial decisions based on what's best for their residents.

#### 4. **How much time do employees spend with residents?**

One of the biggest benefits of living in a supportive or assisted living environment is that there is 24 hour support and care provided by program staff.

In addition to the socialization between residents, the amount of time that employees at these buildings spend with the residents can largely impact their quality of life - both physically and emotionally. We recommend comparing the size of the building to the number of staff members at a facility to help determine if the program has enough staff to ensure thorough attention of their residents.

#### 5. **What safety and security measures are in place?**

Safety and security should be of the utmost importance at a supportive or assisted living building. Many residents move out of their homes and into one of these buildings so they can live more safely; it's important that the programs have systems and features in place that protect their clients.

A few of the many types of safety and security features to look for include: 24 hour emergency call systems which allow residents to easily get the attention of a nurse or other staff member, handrails in areas that may be difficult to safely move around in (like bathrooms) and monitoring systems.

In addition to the daily measures put in place, you should learn about how the program plans to handle an emergency such as a fire, power outage, or evacuation.

If you are looking for a supportive living or assisted living program, Chicagoland Methodist Senior Services offers both as part of our extensive senior services network.

- To learn more about our **supportive living program**, Covenant Home of Chicago, [please click here](#).
- To learn more about our memory care **assisted living program** for dementia patients, The Hartwell, [please click here](#).

Chicagoland Methodist Senior Services also offers many other services to support seniors, including rehabilitation, home care and computer classes. To learn more about the CMSS network of senior services, [please visit cmsschicago.org](http://www.cmsschicago.org) or give us a call at **(773) 942-2655**.



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