DEMENTIA CARE
Checklist

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INTRODUCTION

Your loved one's diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease or other dementia has likely thrown your family life into a bit of chaos. Thankfully, the senior care industry has rallied around those with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias over the past few decades. You are now able to access dementia care communities that are carefully designed with the senior in mind. However, finding the perfect dementia care unit or community can still be a daunting task. In order to make the best decision about dementia care possible, it is good to visit at least three communities more than once. Using your loved one's challenges and prognosis as a lens, you can make the best decision that suits your current situation.

By separating out the "good enough" communities from the "best of the best" communities, you can get a good start on your quest to find a dementia care community. However, you probably still have a few contenders that you need to choose between. Here is an easy checklist to help you be sure that you are asking the right questions and looking for the right things that can make your decision a bit easier. Some of these questions are posed to you, while others are written so that you know the wording to use to ask the dementia care community professional.

Remember: You can follow up with communities as much as you want via phone call, requested tour or other event. Gather all the information you need in order to make a well-informed decision that you will feel good about.

ENVIRONMENT AND LOCATION

- [ ] Is the location convenient for me and other family members to visit frequently?
- [ ] Is the parking situation for visitors welcoming and easy to navigate?
- [ ] Is the community located in a quiet, residential neighborhood?
- [ ] If the community is in a city, will the noises be distracting or concerning to my loved one?
- [ ] Is the community in a city or location that my loved one will enjoy?
- [ ] Is the community located near places I can take my loved one to on my own during visits, such as restaurants or shopping?
- [ ] Does the community smell and look clean?
- [ ] Are there flowers and plants inside and outside of the community?
- [ ] Are there animals in the community (fish, birds, a community dog, etc.), and how will that affect my loved one?
- [ ] May I bring my dog to visit, if my loved one would like that?
- [ ] Are there places that I may visit with my loved one, besides his or her room or apartment?
- [ ] Is there a place available for a larger family gathering within the community that we may rent or reserve if needed?
- [ ] Does the community seem lively but not chaotic?
- [ ] Do the residents seem happy and engaged?
- [ ] Do the residents seem well-groomed?
- [ ] Is there an outdoor space that residents can easily access and enjoy?

APARTMENT AND AMENITIES

- [ ] Are there private apartments available?
- [ ] Do the apartments come furnished with certain items?
- [ ] What are we allowed to bring in from home?
- [ ] Who is in charge of hanging up pictures, shelves, etc.?
- [ ] Will someone be available to help us move in?
- [ ] Are there cueing devices (such as photos or shadow boxes) outside apartments to let residents know which one is theirs?
- [ ] What safety precautions are in the bathroom?
- [ ] Are residents allowed to choose when they take a shower?
- [ ] Is there a place for a resident to take a bath, should he or she want to?
- [ ] Is there a call-light system?
- [ ] Where is the nursing station in regard to the apartments?
- [ ] How often does housekeeping visit my loved one's apartment?
- [ ] Do you do laundry here, or am I responsible for doing it?
- [ ] If you do laundry here, do I need to take any steps in order to prepare the clothing (e.g. labeling)?
- [ ] If my loved one is nervous about a housekeeper coming into his or her apartment to clean, what can you do to make that less stressful for my loved one while still ensuring that the apartment is clean?

MEDICAL MANAGEMENT

- [ ] Do you have a relationship with my loved one's doctor?
- [ ] Are there specialists (podiatrists, dentists, etc.) who visit the unit regularly?
- [ ] Will you work with the pharmacy to order new medications and refill old ones, or do I need to do that?
- [ ] Can you support my loved one's chronic condition with _____ (oxygen use, etc.)?
- [ ] May my loved one have a walker in this unit? A wheelchair? An electric scooter?
- [ ] How do you inform me and the doctor about any change in my loved one's condition? A fall? An emergency-room visit?
- [ ] Does my loved one have access to therapy (physical, occupational, speech) services right here in the unit?
- [ ] Does my loved one have access to range-of-motion exercises here in the unit?

STAFFING

- [ ] What types of training does your staff receive on an ongoing basis?
- [ ] Can you give me a few topics that your staff has been educated about in the past few months?
- [ ] Are all staff required to attend trainings, or is it just the nursing staff?
- [ ] Are nurses on staff 24 hours a day? Are those nurses RNs or LPNs?
- [ ] Are your caregivers also CNAs?
- [ ] What are your staffing ratios for different times of the day? Do those fluctuate based on resident need?
- [ ] Do you have volunteers who work with residents too?

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- [ ] What is the monthly rent?
- [ ] What does this monthly fee include?
- [ ] Are there additional costs assessed for more care or assistance? What are those?
- [ ] Will you let me know before any prices increase?
- [ ] How are prescriptions billed?
- [ ] How are other medical services (therapy, dentist visits, etc.) billed?
- [ ] Do you accept Medicaid?
- [ ] Do you accept my loved one's long-term care or secondary insurance?
- [ ] What happens when my loved one can no longer pay for services or rent?
- [ ] How much do incontinence products cost? May I bring products in that I purchase?
- [ ] What types of items do I need to purchase and bring (shampoo, razors, etc.)?
- [ ] Am I billed for items such as gloves, wipes, or other medical supplies?

ACTIVITIES

- [ ] May I meet your activities director and staff?
- [ ] May I attend an activity with my loved one?
- [ ] Do residents seem engaged and happy when you visit the unit?
- [ ] Are there activities on the activity calendar that my loved one would enjoy?
- [ ] Are there trips planned on a monthly basis?
- [ ] Are there activities planned seven days a week?
- [ ] Are there activities planned for evening times?
- [ ] Does the community offer religious services or support that meet my loved one's needs?
- [ ] Does the community invite kids into the community for intergenerational programming?
- [ ] Does the community offer therapy dog visits to interested residents?
- [ ] Are there activities available that encourage exercise and range of motion (sit and be fit, yoga, tai chi, etc.)?
- [ ] Are there activities that encourage failure-free conversation (reminiscence groups, etc.)?
- [ ] Residents with middle- and late-stage dementia often respond well to multisensory experiences. Does the community offer those (hand massages, sensory stimulation groups, etc.)?
- [ ] Are families able to participate in activities with loved ones?
- [ ] How do you encourage residents to attend groups?
- [ ] If residents are unable to sit for long activities, how do you meet their needs for socialization?
- [ ] May residents suggest activities for the community?

DINING

- [ ] Is the dining room homelike and welcoming?
- [ ] May I observe a meal?
- [ ] Does the menu offer choices for residents?
- [ ] If residents cannot or do not speak, how do you determine which entree or choice they would like?
- [ ] My loved one doesn't like _____. What options do you have for him or her?
- [ ] My loved one cannot use a fork. Do you have healthy finger foods that encourage independence?
- [ ] Is there assistance in the dining room during meals?
- [ ] Are your chefs experienced in cooking medically recommended diets?
- [ ] May residents assist with homelike tasks like setting the table?

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

- [ ] Are families involved in the life of the community?
- [ ] Do the visiting hours suit your personal and professional schedule?
- [ ] Do you feel welcome when you enter the building?
- [ ] During your tour, do you notice family members or friends visiting?
- [ ] Are there educational lectures available for families or friends?
- [ ] Are there regularly scheduled Family Nights or other events that encourage participation?
- [ ] How are family members notified of upcoming care plans?
- [ ] If you live far away or are on vacation, how can the community keep you updated on the daily life of your loved one?
- [ ] Is there a community Facebook, Instagram, or blog page?
- [ ] Is there a family newsletter available each month?
- [ ] Do the executive director and other management staff make an effort to get to know family members?

UNIQUE CHALLENGES AND CONTINUING CARE

- [ ] My loved one has a unique challenge (wandering, aggression, anxiety, etc.). How will you work with that while preserving his or her dignity?
- [ ] Is there anything that may jeopardize my loved one's living here? When may he or she be asked to move out?
- [ ] Will we have ample notice if we are asked to move out?
- [ ] Do you work with any skilled nursing communities in the area if my loved one would need inpatient care?

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Choosing a dementia care community is a daunting task, but one that is easier when you start sooner than later. Further, the process can be much less stressful when you begin looking at already high-quality communities such as Arbor Terrace Fulton. Call us to set up a tour and conversation to discuss how we can best serve your family and your loved one.

Find a Community Near You

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