



What is Assisted Living??

Many of my monthly articles reflect the questions and concerns I hear from older adults and their family members. Recently I talked with Sam, an 85-year-old gentleman, and his son Joe, about their efforts to plan for Sam's future of care. They both spoke about their frustration and confusion about the types of services and care that are available for older adults today. Joe wants to do the right thing for his father, so he is in the process of learning about housing options and how he can be proactive should the need arise.

Those of us in the healthcare field casually refer to a myriad of acronyms and terms to describe the types of facilities and services available today. One of the most challenging to understand is Assisted Living and all that it offers.

Through my search on national and state regulatory and provider agencies, I have found many comprehensive definitions for Assisted Living, Personal Care, Residential Care or Boarding Homes. Facilities use a variety of terms, but all fall under the same regulatory agency. For our purpose, here is a general definition of Assisted Living: *State-licensed programs offered at senior residential communities with services that include assistance with meals, bathing, dressing, continence care and other routine daily needs such as housekeeping and medication reminders. Medical services vary from facility to facility. Assisted Living may also be referred to as Personal Care, Residential Care or Boarding Homes.*

If you, like Joe, wonder if Assisted Living is right for your parent, use the following questions to guide your decision.

- Is your parent able to correctly take medications?
- Is your parent eating a balanced diet? Is there enough of the right foods on hand?
- Does your parent appear to be well-groomed? Is their personal appearance neat and clean?
- How would your parent respond to an emergency? Have you asked lately what they would do in case of a fire?
- Is your parent active and social? Or are they sleeping longer in the morning and more frequently during the day?

The decision to take the next step is a difficult one, but one that offers a safe environment and the care needed by a competent and compassionate staff.

For more information about Assisted Living facilities in your area, please call Dana O'Donnell, Director of Liberty at Home, at 215-643-6496.