

This information is forwarded by the **Love Thy Neighbor Ministry** at Saint Rose of Lima Catholic Church, Milton FL.  
Source of Information: The Catholic Foundation of Northwest Florida. Due to the many references, some may not be current but have many useful reference sources. Emails are sent using the Blind Carbon Copy (BCC) method.

This quality of life series focuses primarily on senior citizens plus other supplemental information. You do not have to be a Senior to make use of this information. If you know of a Senior, a parishioner or a neighbor who could use this information you are invited to give them a copy of this email. Fellowship through improved communications is guided by the second greatest commandment. Sometimes an act of kindness can be as simple as a phone call, a visit, or receipt of an email.

**Suggestion: Create a separate folder of this information for ease of future reference.**

For information about our Parish, click on the following link: <http://parishesonline.com/scripts/HostedSites/Org.asp?ID=14423>

**Our parish spirit is rising, is rising.**

## Choosing an Assisted Living Facility

[http://www.legacygifts.org/savvy\\_senior.jsp?WebID=GL2004-0129&D=200733](http://www.legacygifts.org/savvy_senior.jsp?WebID=GL2004-0129&D=200733)

**Dear Savvy Senior,**

Can you tell me about assisted living facilities and how to go about choosing one for my 83-year-old mother?  
Need Assistance

Dear Need,

Assisted living facilities have become a popular option for elderly people who are no longer able to live independently but who don't need nursing home care either. Here's what you should know.

### **Assisted Living**

Currently, there are more than 1 million residents living in around 36,000 assisted living facilities nationwide. While there's no standard blueprint for how these facilities are constructed, the services they typically provide are 24-hour staffing, assistance with personal care (bathing, dressing, eating, going to the bathroom), meals, housekeeping, laundry, transportation, social activities and medication management. A growing number of facilities also offer special care units for residents with dementia.

### **Finding Good Care**

When it comes to choosing an assisted living facility, many people make uninformed and rushed decisions. After you determine your mother's physical needs and financial resources, here are some steps that can help you find a good assisted living facility and avoid a bad one:

**Make a list:** Contact your Area Agency on Aging for a list of assisted living facilities. Get a list of five or six facilities that are preferably close to family and friends who can visit often. The national Eldercare Locator (800-677-1116, or [www.eldercare.gov](http://www.eldercare.gov)) can direct you to your local agency.

**Call your local ombudsman:** This is a government official who investigates long-term care facility complaints. Ask whether there have been complaints with the facilities on your list and how to obtain inspection reports, if there are any. To find your local ombudsman, call your area aging agency or see [www.ltombudsman.org](http://www.ltombudsman.org).

**Call the facilities:** Once you have a list of facilities and checked them out with the ombudsman, give them a call. Find out if they are licensed by the state, if they provide the kind of services to meet your mother's needs, what they charge and if they have any vacancies. Then, if you're still interested, ask them to send you more information including brochures, pricing details, levels of care, resident's rights, medication policies, discharge criteria and the contract or residential agreement. Once you receive the materials, read them carefully and write down any questions you have so you can remember to ask them when you go in for a visit.

Tour your top choices: It's wise to visit at least two or three facilities so you can adequately compare them. If possible, bring your mother along, too. While you're there, notice the cleanness and smell of the facility. Is it homey and inviting? Does the staff seem friendly and knowledgeable? Also be sure to taste the food and checkout their monthly activity schedule to see what kinds of stimulation you mother will receive.

Evaluate the staff: Ask to meet the administrator. Find out about staff screening, training procedures and the staff turnover rate. Also ask how many residents each staff member has to care for (the smaller the number, the better).

Talk to the residents: Ask how they like living there. Do they like the food, the staff, and the activities?

Visit unannounced: An unannounced visit on a weekend or in the evening might be very helpful in making your decision.

**Savvy Tips:** If you need help finding a good facility, call a geriatric care manager (see [www.caremanager.org](http://www.caremanager.org)).

These are professionals who can assess your mother's needs and recommend some good facilities to meet them.

The cost for an initial assessment is around \$300 to \$600. Another good resource is the Consumer Consortium on Assisted Living ([www.ccal.org](http://www.ccal.org) or 703-533-8121), which offers a consumers video and guide (for a small fee) on choosing a facility. Also see [www.ncal.org](http://www.ncal.org) and [www.alfa.org](http://www.alfa.org).

## Costs

Most people pay for assisted living themselves, some with the help of long-term care insurance. Monthly costs can range from \$1,750 to \$6,000 or more, depending on where you live, the facility you choose and the services provided (the national average is nearly \$3,000/month). Shared rooms, if available, cost less. Medicare does not cover assisted living. In some states however, Medicaid programs pay for some services for residents with low incomes, but the majority of facilities accept private pay only.