

STILL CURIOUS STUDIO

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH CHERIELONGART.COM

BEFORE CHOOSING AN ASSISTED LIVING OR MEMORY CARE COMMUNITY

I'm Cherie Long, and after a 27+ year career as an Executive Director and Oregon Licensed Administrator in Assisted Living and Memory Care communities, I've learned there are important questions families often don't know to ask.

WHAT ASSISTED LIVING AND MEMORY CARE COMMUNITIES CAN...AND CAN'T PROMISE

**Don't only ask whether they can meet your or your loved one's needs today.
Ask what happens when today's needs change.**

FALLS

Over the years, I've seen family members and/or residents with unrealistic expectations that moving into a care community will prevent falls.

Assisted Living and Memory Care Communities can support independence and **reduce** fall risk by assessing risk, responding to changes in condition, paying attention to environmental hazards, evaluating the need for assistive devices, etc., but they cannot eliminate aging, changes in condition, individual choices, or risk.

ASK:

- **If "mom" begins falling more frequently, what happens?**
- **How will they notice?**
- **How and when will they reassess?**
- **How will they respond?**

CHANGING CARE NEEDS

A person moving into a care community today, may not have the same care needs six months, one year, three years or more from now. Ask questions before you make a decision to minimize the risk of surprises when needs change.

ASK:

- **How are reassessments done? Who is included?**
- **Ask about routine care plan reviews done versus Change in Condition reassessments.**
- **When care needs increase, that often comes with an increased Level of Care charge. How does that work?**

IF THEY TELL YOU THAT YOU OR YOUR LOVED ONE WILL NEVER HAVE TO MOVE

Be wary. Ask the hard questions if you hear that. Unless you are visiting a true continuum-of-care community with access to progressively higher levels of care, that is a promise to be skeptical of. Ask specifically what levels of care are available and what happens if your needs eventually exceed what the community can provide.

Assisted Living and Memory Care are not the same as skilled nursing. They primarily provide support with personal care and Activities of Daily Living (ADLs), along with other services allowed within their licensing and scope of care.

ASK:

- **What medical needs are outside your scope of care?**
- **Can you accommodate routine insulin? What about sliding-scale insulin or more complex diabetic needs?**
- **What skilled medical needs can you not accommodate?**
- **Can you provide ongoing two-person transfers?**
- **What happens if dementia-related behaviors develop or increase? (Exit seeking, wandering, physical aggression, etc.)?**
- **What happens if someone becomes bedridden or needs feeding assistance?**
- **Can you accommodate medically necessary or specialized diets?**

WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU OR YOUR LOVED ONE RUN OUT OF MONEY?

Care communities can cost thousands of dollars each month, and over time those costs may exhaust a person's financial resources. If that is a possibility, understand the community's policies before you commit.

ASK:

- **What if you or your loved one runs out of money?**
- **Do they accept Medicaid or a spend-down to Medicaid?**
- **If so, do they have a minimum required private pay period?**
- **If you or your loved one spends down, will you have to move to a smaller apartment?**
- **Will there be a change in the services and care you receive?**

FINAL THOUGHTS

Policies, licensing requirements and available services vary by community and by state, so ask each community how these situations are handled specifically.

This is by no means an exhaustive list, but my hope is it will help you make a better informed decision. If you have questions that weren't answered here, feel free to email me at: cherie.long71@gmail.com