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Voice

Serving Alaskans 50+ Since 1978

A publication of Older Persons Action Group, Inc.

Senior Housing

August 2019

INSIDE: News from Alaska
housing, care providers

**The ABCs
(and XYZs) of
selecting an
assisted living
home**

**Technology is making
homes smarter and
more livable**



2018
National Mature
Media Awards
Winner



The ABCs of choosing a long term care facility in Alaska

By TERESA HOLT

Alaska Long Term Care
Ombudsman

Individuals and their families often find themselves looking for a long term care facility in the middle of a family crisis, frequently after a hospitalization. Usually the discharge planner wants to find a placement as soon as possible –preferably yesterday. Most people have little to no knowledge of how to find a facility that will help someone with their daily care needs. Sometimes it is possible to arrange for a personal care attendant to come into the home for several hours a day and help with bathing, food preparation and light housekeeping. If the person needs more assistance than this, there are two choices: assisted living homes and nursing facilities. Most people do not know that health insurance and Medicare do not pay for care in an assisted living home or nursing facility. Long term care insurance will only pay for the services listed in the policy. VA benefits pay for some services and not others depending on your eligibility.

Deciding what type of facility to choose and how to pay for services is a complicated process, which depends on the individual's needs, income and resources. The best place to start is by calling the Aging and Disability Resource Center (1-855-565-2017). They will connect you with an intake specialist who will do a person-centered intake. They will help you understand what payment options are available to you as well as which type of long term care facility would be best for you.

Once it has been determined whether the individual would best be served in an assisted living home or nursing facility and how this care will be paid for, it is a good idea to call the office of the Long Term Care Ombudsman (907-334-4480 or 1-800-730-6393) to help you select a facility that will match the individual's needs and

preferences. The following ABCs (in alphabetical order) will help you gather the information you need to decide which long term care facility would be the best placement.

Administrator. Talk to the administrator in person. Ask how often they are in the facility. Find out if they have another fulltime job. Ask how many other facilities they supervise. Decide if the administrator seems respectful and is willing to work with you. Ask what training and experience the administrator has in running a facility. Ask the administrator how they decide how many staff they need. For example: Do they have staff who are awake all night? How many caregivers do they currently have during the day and at night? Are there any nurses working for the facility?

Behavior. Ask what training staff have in working with residents who have dementia and aggressive behaviors. Ask how the facility prevents residents with dementia from wandering away.

Call for assistance. Ask how the residents let the staff know they need assistance. Many facilities have a call button the residents can use when they need assistance. Yelling to get staff to come is not the best system, especially at night when staff may be asleep. During a visit, observe how much care the other residents need and look to see if they have enough staff to meet all the residents' needs. For example: How many residents are unable to get out of bed, use a wheelchair, or need assistance with eating?

Discharge. The most common reason facilities discharge residents is behavior. This is usually when a resident is exhibiting challenging behaviors such as aggression or wandering. It is helpful to talk to staff about what training they have had in working with residents who have dementia or exhibit other challenging behaviors. Residents can also be discharged for not

Deciding what type of facility to choose and how to pay for services is a complicated process, which depends on the individual's needs, income and resources ... Most people have little to no knowledge of how to find a facility that will help someone with their daily care needs.

following the rules in the contract, so make sure the person moving into the facility is willing to follow all the rules, especially those regarding smoking and drinking alcohol.

Emergency preparedness. Ask the provider what their plan is for an earthquake, flood, fire or other disaster. Ask to see the emergency preparedness plan, equipment and supplies. Observe the abilities of the other residents and try to determine if there are enough staff to get all the residents out of the building in an emergency. Ask at what point the facility contacts the family members after a fall or when residents become ill and need to go to the emergency room. Ask the staff if they are required to contact the administrator before calling 911 as this can delay medical care.

Facility. Look to see if the facility is clean and in good repair. The most common place seniors get injuries from falls tends to

be the bathroom. Be sure to check out the safety of the bathroom by checking to see if grab bars are installed in the shower and by the toilet. Test them to make sure they are securely fastened to the wall. If the person moving in uses a wheelchair, ensure there is enough space to maneuver in the rooms, especially in the bathroom. Also, check to make sure the sidewalks are clear of ice and snow. Ask to see the bedroom that is available and if the furniture is provided. Think about how you can personalize the space to make the resident feel more at home.

Grievance. Ask what the grievance process is when there is a complaint about the care or a specific staff person. Contact the licensing agency and ask what kind of complaints the facility has recently had that were verified (see contact information under "Licensure").

Hygiene. During a visit, observe the residents

to see if they are wearing clean clothes and have good hygiene. Ask the staff if they do laundry for each resident and if they charge extra for that service.

Insurance. Long term care insurance can be complicated. Make sure you understand what your policy covers and what it does not cover. Ask your insurance company what documentation you need to demonstrate eligibility to receive services in a facility and who needs to submit bills.

Joy. Having something to do each day is crucial to being happy. Talk with the staff to see what activities they provide for residents. Find out if they take the residents out into the community. Ask if the facility provides TV, cable or Wi-Fi included in the basic rate. Look to see if residents have TVs in their own rooms. Ask the staff if there are phones in each resident's room.

Kindness. The cleanest home in the world cannot make up for brusque, thoughtless caregivers. It is important for the residents and the staff to have positive relationships with each other. During a visit, watch the staff and residents to see if they enjoy

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Unique opportunity to check out Alaskan senior housing and home care services

Senior Voice Staff

The Providence Senior Housing Fair takes place August 21 at the Anchorage Senior Center, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., sponsored in part by Alaska Housing Finance Corp. and Cook Inlet Housing Authority. The popular event is a rare opportunity for "one stop" shopping for senior housing needs. Attendees visit informational booths staffed by a variety of businesses and agencies

and listen to presentations on independent housing, in-home services, assisted living, skilled nursing care and more for seniors in Anchorage, the Mat-Su Valley area and Seward.

This year's speakers include:

"Aging in Community," with AARP Alaska Advocacy Director Ken Helander, 11:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.

"Legal Peace of Mind," with elder law attorney Ilona Besseney, 12:30 to 1:30 p.m.

"Simple Balance Exercise Program," with Providence In-Home Services physical therapist Colleen Kirkpatrick

"What's New with Medicare," with certified Medicare counselor Nila Morgan, 3 to 4 p.m.

For more information about the Senior Housing Fair, please call 907-654-7492



Aspen Creek: State-of-the-art amenities, activities

Aspen Creek

At Aspen Creek Senior Living we are building something revolutionary, right here in Anchorage. It's a product of goals and inspiration founded on the expertise of community planners and health care professionals with a resolve to do something fundamentally different. A new approach to assisted living that connects generations, brings families together, and values our seniors.

Our team at Aspen Creek strives to recognize and honor the legacy each of our residents has to share. We provide a supportive environment for them to tell their stories with their families, our team and the community. Our social wellness programs are a catalyst for our residents to share their legacies with future generations through storytelling ses-

sions with other residents, local schools and community groups.

At Aspen Creek, each resident receives a variety of services such as compassionate care, fine dining, housekeeping, scheduled group transportation, security and access to social wellness and educational programs. They live independently, enjoying the lifestyle they create for themselves.

Our unique amenities include a library with a cozy stone fireplace for educational classes and storytelling sessions. The movie theater for family movie nights, sporting events, music performances and more facilitates a warm and inviting community atmosphere. The community dining room focuses on nutrition, taste and presentation of Alaska-style fine dining meals planned by our registered dietitian and prepared by



Artist's rendition of the Aspen Creek lobby area.

our award-winning executive chef using local and sustainably sourced ingredients whenever possible. Our wellness center with state-of-the-art physical therapy, fitness programs, exercise classes, yoga and weights help our residents live their best life. The salon and spa with jetted tub, three stylists, manicure station, pedicure station, and massage services is open to the public so residents can invite their

friends and family to join them for spa days.

Aspen Creek Senior Living is the beginning of a beautiful new chapter, full of new friendships and ex-

periences. We take a holistic approach to senior care, getting to know each person individually in order to fully support their healthy and active lifestyle. Residents are invited and encouraged to play an integral role in our tightly knit community. With a calendar strategically

planned for social activities and wellness programs, there is always something enriching, informative and entertaining to experience.

See ad below for contact information.

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Smart home devices can help seniors age-in-place

BY JIM MILLER

Savvy Senior

Dear Savvy Senior: I recently read an article about how “smart home” devices can help seniors with aging-in-place. What types of smart home products can you recommend that can help with this? – *Inquiring Senior*

Dear Inquiring: There are actually a wide variety of affordable smart home devices you can add to your home that can help make it safer and easier to live in as you age. Here’s what you should know.

Smart home technologies

While most Americans today use technology and enjoy the conveniences they provide, there are millions of seniors who still don’t have much use for it. But you don’t have to like technology or be tech savvy to benefit from the many different smart home automation devices that can help seniors age-in-place.

Smart home devices can also give family members and caregivers the ability to electronically keep tabs on

These devices can also play your favorite music, read audiobooks, make calls, set timers and alarms, provide reminders for medications, appointments and other things, check traffic and weather, ask questions, and much more – all done by voice commands.

their elder loved one when they can’t be there, which provides peace-of-mind.

If you’re interested in adding some smart home products to your house, you need to know that these devices require home Wi-Fi, and for many of the products, you’ll need

either a smartphone, tablet or voice-enabled assistant to operate them. Here are some popular aging-in-place smart home products to help you get started.

Voice-enabled assistant. Popular products like the Amazon Echo (Amazon.com/echo), Google As-

sistant (Assistant.google.com) or Apple HomePod (Apple.com/homepod) will let you operate compatible smart home products with simple voice commands.

These devices can also play your favorite music, read audiobooks, make calls, set timers and alarms, provide reminders for medications, appointments and other things, check traffic and weather, ask questions, and much more – all done by voice commands.

Smart lights. Falls are

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Your forever home is at Oasis at Birch Lake

Oasis at Birch Lake

“I love my forever home,” says Ann, a happy Oasis at Birch Lake homeowner, and here is why.

Safe and secure. Located just north of the “wind belt” of Wasilla, the gated community of no more than 22 homes allows Ann to take safe daily walks with her dog to enjoy the lake wildlife. Also, traveling “outside” is more relaxing knowing all is secure at home.

Environmental wonderland. Because Birch Lake is non-motorized, it is home to sandhill cranes, swans, loons, ducks and even the occasional river otters. There are fish in the lake, and the salmon migrate up Meadow Creek, which flows through the north end of the property.

Barrier free design. All the homes have ADA considerations throughout, including a large master bath with roll-in shower.

The private guest suite could be used by a caregiver if needed. The oversize garage allows room for a wheelchair or workshop.

Luxurious quality. The homes feature quartz counter tops, plywood cabinets, solid doors, 9’ walls, ample windows and extensive tile work. Even the insulated doors are hand painted with woodgrain finish to match the interior.

Convenient location. The Oasis is located a mile from the town center of Big Lake. All services expected of a small town are available in this friendly community, as well as a library, four parks and many recreation facilities. A doctor’s office, dentist and physical therapist are also here to serve you. There are many opportunities to volunteer, staying active and involved. And with the Parks Highway four-lane expansion underway, it is only a short drive to the “big city”.

Many affordable housing options. There are 10 lakefront townhomes, and 12 large homesites (over an acre) with access to the lake and to the creek. The lakefront townhomes are two or three-bedroom with one or two stall garages, and start at \$255,000 with HOA dues of \$65 per month, making the Oasis a cost-effective

solution for retirement.

Energy efficiency. The homes are 5-star plus energy rated with natural gas and underground power. In-floor heat is controlled by four zones to optimize comfort. Cost effective direct and indirect LED lighting and the natural gas fireplace provide a wonderful ambiance.

Extras and options. A free 12’x40’ designated RV parking area is provided for each homeowner. Some chosen options at an extra cost are a covered porch, a solarium, a dock on the lake, or roofing the RV parking stall.

For more information, visit www.TheOasisAtBirchLake.com.

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www.TheOasisAtBirchLake.com
Contact Aimee Moats to schedule a tour!

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Your grandkids are going to love The Oasis.



ABCs of choosing: Assisted living

Continued from page H2

each other's company. Watch the interaction between staff and residents. Pay attention to whether the residents seem content or bored.

Licensure. Always choose a home licensed by the state. Assisted Living Licensing (269-3640) and Health Facilities Licensing and Certification (334-2483) inspect all long term care facilities and investigate complaints. You can also contact these agencies to ask if there have been verified complaints or sanctions against the home. They can also provide you with the most recent inspection or survey. If you choose an unlicensed facility, it is important to know that no agency will be overseeing the services they provide and there will be no one to investigate if you have a complaint.

Match. Determine if the facility is a good match for the person moving in. Observe the other residents in the facility to see if they would be someone you or your family member would like to live with. The values of the facility and the resident should match as close as possible. Understand all the rules of the facility and make sure they are a good fit for the person moving in. For example: Does the facility allow alcohol? Marijuana use? Are you interested in a home that has staff that speak a specific language? Do you want to live with all females or all males? Are you religious?

Neighborhood. The location of the facility is an important consideration. The closer it is to family and friends, the more likely they are to visit. If the facility is near where the resident used to live, it can help maintain contacts

in the community such as being able to attend church, visit friends and attend family events.

Odor. When you visit the facility, pay attention to how it smells. The facility should smell like someone's home, not like urine or harsh cleaning agents.

Privacy. Moving from your own home into a facility is a tough transition for the person moving, so it is nice to have your own space. Ask to see the room that is vacant. Some facilities have shared bedrooms, so it is important to ask if the room is shared. If the room is shared, ask to meet the roommate. Talk with the staff about what they do when roommates do not get along.

Quality of life. Everyone needs three things in life: positive relationships, something interesting to do each day, and to be helpful to others in some way. Find out how the facility is able to meet these basic needs. For example: Do staff provide companionship and not just care to residents? Does the facility provide interesting and meaningful daily activities or do the residents just watch TV all day? Are there plants or animals in the facility that residents are allowed to care for? Does the facility provide some type of intergenerational activities?

Rights. The facility is the resident's home. Residents have many of the same rights in a facility as they would in their own home. They have the right to be treated with respect, to set their schedule including when they want to get up, to have choices in what they eat, and so on. Talk with the staff about what choices are offered to the residents.

Smoking. Many facilities, especially nursing facilities, do not allow smoking. If the person moving in is a smoker, this is an important factor in deciding where to live. Some facilities, mostly as-

Let Alaska Dinner Factory solve your lunch or dinner dilemmas

Alaska Dinner Factory

When Linnea Cummings' mother-in-law was fighting cancer, she had some meals delivered to her home. Linnea took one look at the greasy French fries and non-fresh food that was being sent and knew she could do a better job. Now, through her business Alaska Dinner Factory (ADF), Cummings is making lunch and dinner easier for hundreds of Alaskans.

Alaska Dinner Factory does all of the meal planning, shopping, chopping and preparation of quality meals. Whether you need one serving or a large dinner for entertaining guests, ADF takes the hassle out of cooking. You get quality, nutritious meals that look and taste great.

Alaska Dinner Factory offers several different types of meal services. Some are delivered right to your door and others are ready for pickup from the To-Go-Cooler at the Lake



Alaska Dinner Factory owner Linnea Cummings.

Otis & Dowling store in Anchorage. Choices include:

Alaska Fresh

ADF delivers single-serving cooked meals to seniors across Anchorage. Lunches are ready-to-eat items like sandwiches, wraps and salads. Dinners are fully cooked, ready to microwave. Delivery of two meals a day costs \$1,350 per month. For clients like Elizabeth C., the meal deliveries have been a lifesaver while she recovers from back and gallbladder surgery.

"I can't stand for very long, so cooking is impossible," says Elizabeth. "I am so blessed that I qualified for Medicaid waiver to pay for this service. The meals are really good, the delivery guy is friendly and I am so thankful for good food while I'm healing."

Delivery club

Monthly delivery of 3- or 6-serving dinners is another option that is perfect for someone who is able to do some cooking. Choose from 14 menu items

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TIRED OF STRUGGLING WITH WHAT'S FOR LUNCH OR DINNER?

*Know a senior who needs help
with meals?*

Alaska Dinner Factory has options to help:

Alaska Fresh Delivered: Fresh, single-serving, ready-to-eat lunches and microwavable dinners delivered daily to seniors all over Anchorage. Starting at \$900/month or we accept Medicaid waiver.

Delivery Club: Pre-assembled, 3-serving size dinners. The menu changes each month and you choose the dinners you want. Pickup one for \$18 or have 12 delivered each month for \$195.

Alaska Fresh Pickup: Pick up single-serving lunch salads for \$10 or a microwavable dinner entrée for \$12 from the To-Go Cooler at our Lake Otis & Dowling store.



Alaska
Dinner Factory

www.AlaskaDinnerFactory.com
(907) 677-6633

or come by and see us at 5905 Lake Otis Parkway

**After the initial visit,
drop in unannounced,
preferably at
mealtime, so you can
see what it is like
when no one knows
you are coming.**

page H8 please



Technology: Devices, apps make homes more livable

continued from page H4

common concerns among elderly seniors, which are often caused by fumbling around a dark room looking for a light switch. Smart light bulbs like the Philips Hue (MeetHue.com) can turn on and off the lights by voice command, smartphone or tablet. These bulbs can also dim the lights and you can program them to turn on and off whenever you want.

There are also smart electric plugs like the Wemo Mini (Wemo.com) that offer remote control automation for lamps, fans or other electrical devices.

Video doorbell. Safety is also a concern for seniors who live alone. Smart doorbells like the Ring video doorbell (Ring.com) would allow you to see, hear and speak to someone at the

You don't have to like technology or be tech savvy to benefit from the many different smart home automation devices that can help seniors age-in-place.

door (via smartphone, tablet, Google smart displays, Amazon Echo Show or Spot) without having to open it.

Stovetop shut-off. To help seniors prevent home cooking fires, stovetop shut-off devices like the IGuardStove (IGuardFire.com) uses motion sensors to turn off electric and gas stovetops when left unattended for a predetermined amount of time. It will also alert family members via text.

Medication management. Seniors on a complex medication schedule can benefit from a smart medication tracking system like the PillDrill (PillDrill.com) that reminds you when pills are due, tracks that you've

taken them, and notifies loved ones.

Home monitoring. Family members can keep tabs on older loved ones from afar with smart home video cameras like Light-house AI (Light.house/elderly-care) or a smart

home sensor system like TruSense (MyTruSense.com).

Other options. Some other helpful smart home products to consider include smart door locks like Kwikset Kevo (Kwikset.com), smart thermostats such as the Nest (Nest.com), and smart night-lights like Aladin (Domalys.com), which detects falls and alerts caregivers.

The costs for most smart

home products range anywhere from a few dollars to several hundred dollars and they can be found in many local home improvement stores as well as online.

Send your senior questions to: Savvy Senior, P.O. Box 5443, Norman, OK 73070, or visit SavvySenior.org. Jim Miller is a contributor to the NBC Today show and author of "The Savvy Senior" book.

Dinner: To-go and delivery

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each month. The price is \$18 for a 3-serving portion if you pick it up at ADF's store, or \$195 a month for 12, 3-serving dinners delivered to your home. Most of the meals come in a pan or Ziploc bag. Freeze them, then cook dinner in the oven or on the stove

or grill when you're ready!

To-go dinners and salads

Alaska Fresh dinners and salads also are available for pickup in the store cooler. Dinners include an entrée, starch and vegetable for \$12 each. Different salads each week are \$10.

There's a limited supply of meals each day, but you also can call ahead.

Improve your nutrition, save money and make life simpler by letting Alaska Dinner Factory answer the question of "what's for dinner?" Learn more at www.AlaskaDinnerFactory.com or call us at (907) 677-6633.

The Directory for Older Alaskans

It's all right here in a spiral bound, easy-to-use format. Order your copy today for just \$5 (plus \$3.50 postage and handling)



Your guide to senior services throughout Alaska. Published by Older Persons Action Group, Inc. this booklet is packed with up-to-date information for people in need of senior-related services:

Comprehensive listings of state agencies and programs, including contact telephone numbers.

Local contact numbers for national programs like Medicare and Social Security.

Regional listings, alphabetized by city, of local organizations and services

- Assisted-living
- Legal assistance
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- Support services
- Meal programs
- Volunteer organizations
- Health Care
- Housing
- Veterans groups



YES! Send me _____ copies of the
Directory for Older Alaskans

(I have included \$5 + \$3.50 per copy)

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Home and care: A tale of two journeys

Preferred Care At Home and Opus Memoria

‘Alaskans look out for one and other’ never was a saying, a slogan or even a cliché in the early days of our fledgling frontier. It was just the way it was. With extreme climate, limited growing season, and far distances from industrial convenience, Alaskans had to plan ahead, look out, and even *did without* when necessary. This kind of spirit is still prevalent, even as oil has changed our state. Isn’t it true that Alaska’s rich history is in her people? This is a girl who has lived the story, One Suzanne Hickel.

It starts with Oscar Gill, Suzanne (Gill) Hickel’s pioneering great grandfather who delivered mail by dog team for the U.S. Postal Service in the early 1900s. Back then, bonds with neighboring friends were strong, and family bonds

were stronger. Your credit rating was your word and a handshake.

Self-sufficiency was a stock-in-trade. When someone was in need – the job got done. There were no second thoughts because a grateful friend was gained. For these kinds of values, more families have stayed in Alaska to retire and be with their kids and grandkids to complete the fulfillment of life, which by the way doesn’t have to end with physical limitations. This is where her journey began...

Journey # 1

Not every family is available to care for a loved in the way they truly deserve, because we live a different life now that constantly demands our attention. Our routines have become busy and complicated. Thus, we have traded some hardships of old for more of our precious time. Suzanne realized this within her



Fifth generation Alaskan Susan (Gill) Hickel

large family network and so opened **Preferred Care at Home**.

By building a large “Care-Force” of professionals to assist with basic needs in the home, families have more flexibility. By maintaining independence, our seniors may stay in their homes and can remain dignified and more accepting of love and affection from family and friends. Creating

something special is never easy. There were other companies, but not other Suzanne Hickels. Her heart, work ethic, and attention to even the small matters made the challenge a mission. The constant goal of **Preferred Care at Home** is to help our elders enjoy the company of others – absent the doubt of whether that attention is out of charity or true spontaneity. They get caring professionals, you get good times and good cheer. That’s what makes Preferred Care a success!

Journey #2

What happens if Mom or Dad can no longer be safe and comfortable at home due to memory issues and decline? Suzanne often deals with this. Goodbyes are always sad for her and she wants the best for her clients. The alternatives were not always optimal, especially for those with

memory issues... hence the second part of the story: Going from wanting the best solution, to being the best solution.

Team Suzanne wanted a place that was a home, not an institution. A place where those with declining memory could still live for the day! A place that was clean and inviting. A place where friends *are* family, and visits encouraged. A place where memory might fail, but moments of life enjoyed. She wanted a trained and professional staff, selecting only the right people, with the right disposition, fitting the highest standards.

That place became a reality. That place became **Opus Memoria**, *the work of memories*. It currently has expanded at the location, and others are in the works. Their drive is to “*Serve Others and Serve Well*” and the point of this journey is not to arrive.



Call Now!



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Peace of mind with Providence Continuing Care

Providence Alaska

Choosing housing for loved ones no longer able to live independently can be stressful. There are many things to consider when helping an aging family member or friend transition to a new living situation. Perhaps your loved one requires full-time care, or maybe they're able to live alone but would benefit from an on-call caregiver. There's no blueprint for every situation. That's why Providence offers a variety of housing options throughout Southcentral Alaska. Our long-term care for residents requiring 24-hour care and assisted living homes focus on the individual, emphasizing personal choice and encouraging independence. Each one is designed to care for the whole person, from an individual's physical needs to their psychological and emotional health.

Providence Extended Care

Residents at Providence Extended Care in Anchorage receive the long-term, around-the-clock quality care of a skilled nursing facility in a traditional home setting with private



bedrooms and baths. A warm hearth and shared dining room and kitchen create comfortable social environments. Residents are involved in all facets of life, including planning menus and activities, and are given many opportunities to develop life-enhancing friendships and a sense of community.

Providence Chiniak Bay Elder House

Providence Chiniak Bay Elder House on Kodiak Island offers long-term, 24-hour nursing care with the comforts of home and activities to ensure our residents have opportunities to enjoy simple pleasures of daily life. Warm and welcoming residences include private bedrooms

and baths to help maintain our residents' sense of dignity. Shared spaces such as an open kitchen and dining area, hearth, sunroom and outdoor patio encourage our residents to meet their neighbors and build friendships, as well as participate in daily activities.

Providence Valdez Extended Care Center

Providence Valdez Extended Care Center provides 24-hour nursing care and rehabilitation services in a comfortable home environment. We help residents enjoy their lives by offering a variety of activities that foster friendships and create a sense of community. Our beautiful 10-bed facility

with spectacular mountain views offers private, comfortable bedrooms and baths in a caring homelike setting for individuals requiring long-term, round-the-clock nursing care.

Providence Seward Mountain Haven

Providence Seward Mountain Haven provides an innovative approach to elder care on the Kenai Peninsula. Imagine access to all the quality medical services of a typical nursing facility in the setting of a traditional home. Ten elders share their lives in one of our four comfortable lodges. They enjoy the privacy of their own bedrooms and bathrooms while gathering in a great room for meals, activities and community. Each lodge provides dining and nutritional services, long-term, 24-hour nursing care, and physical, speech, occupational and wound care therapies. We are also the first in Alaska to be established as a Center of Excellence in Memory Care.

Providence Horizon House

Providence Horizon

House in Anchorage provides a comfortable and safe home for loved ones no longer able to live independently in their home. Housing options include 60 apartments designed for residents who need assistance with daily living activities and two cottages specialized in dementia care. Shared spaces, such as the lovely courtyard, dining room and other areas, promote socialization. Programs for spiritual, educational, creative, physical and social enrichment are available including educational and fun day trips. Residents are encouraged to be as independent as possible with access to 24-hours licensed caregivers available when needed.

To find out what residence might be right for your loved one, visit alaska.providence.org.

The Providence tradition of providing compassionate care dates back more than 115 years to the gold rush when the Sisters of Providence brought health care to Nome. Today, Providence continues that mission of service by providing continuing care for Alaskans who can no longer live independently.

ABCs: Choosing an assisted living home

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sisted living homes, allow smoking. In these facilities, ask staff how they ensure safety for residents who smoke (i.e. supervised smoking, burn proof gloves and aprons). If the person moving in is a non-smoker, make sure they move into a non-smoking facility.

Tasty food. One of the daily pleasures for residents living in a facility is mealtimes. Facilities that provide appetizing, home cooked meals usually have a waiting list. Plan a visit during a meal to see what is prepared for the residents. Also, note if the food being prepared would be a good match to the preferences of the person moving into the facility. If a doctor orders a special diet, ask the staff

how they will meet the resident's dietary needs and what foods they would prepare for them. Also, observe if residents with dementia are encouraged to eat and drink when they forget.

Understand the contract you are signing with the facility and the fee schedule. Be sure you know what services are covered and what is not covered in the monthly cost of care. Private pay cost of care is negotiable and there is no limit, so do not share your income until after you have signed a contract for care. Also, ask under what conditions the home's fees would change and how would you be notified. Ask the administrator about the facility's refund policy if your relative dies or leaves

the home before the end of the month. Be sure to get everything the provider promises to provide in writing. If it is not written in the contract the facility does not have to provide it.

Visit the facility you are considering in person. After the initial visit, drop in unannounced, preferably at mealtime, so you can see what it is like when no one knows you are coming. Pay attention to everything you see, hear and smell.

Watch to see how often caregivers in the home interact with the residents who have dementia. Everyone needs loving words and kind touches. If residents with dementia are ignored because they cannot initiate social interaction, it is not a good sign.

X-rays. Ask the ad-

ministrator if they make medical appointments for residents. Find out if staff can provide transportation and escort residents to medical appointments if family is unavailable. Ask if there is an additional fee for this service. Ask staff how they ensure that residents' prescriptions are filled and that residents take their medications according to the doctor's order.

Yard. During your visit look to see if there is a place where residents can go outside. It is preferable to have a space that is enclosed so that residents with dementia do not wander away. Notice if there are benches to sit on, if the yard is a pleasant place, and listen for traffic or other noise.

Zealous discharge planners. Take the time to find

a facility that will make everyone happy. Discharge planners will often pressure families for an immediate discharge. It is a good idea to start looking for a facility as soon as possible, so you will have more time to choose a facility that is a good match.

We hope this information is helpful to you in choosing a facility that will be a good match. Above all, trust your instincts. If something does not "feel right" about a home, chances are you are picking up on a real problem. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the office of the Long Term Care Ombudsman at 1-800-730-6393 or, in Anchorage, 907-334-4480.