

Assisted Living Industry Lingo You Need to Know

Every industry has its own definitions, acronyms and lingo. Assisted living is no different. Here is a list of common terms you will come across in your research. Having a basic understanding of these will help you ask more informed questions as you visit assisted living communities and speak with the people who work there. Having a base knowledge of terms can also help you decide if assisted living is the right choice for an elderly relative or friend.

What are Activities of Daily Living (ADL)?

Activities of Daily Living are basic self-care tasks. These are the kinds of skills that people usually learn in early childhood, such as eating, drinking, bathing, toileting, dressing, and grooming.

What does the term "Aging in Place" mean?

Aging in place refers to seniors remaining in an assisted living community, or on a campus that often includes assisted living, memory care and/or a skilled nursing facility. The assisted living community or senior campus setting offers a wide variety of services and amenities to meet an aging adult's evolving needs. This is in contrast to moving from one type of residence or facility to another as an aging person requires more advanced care.

What is a "Buy-in" Community?

In a "buy-in" community you pay an initial large "entrance fee" followed by monthly fees (like condo fees) for the use of the property. Terms for the buy-in fee vary greatly between communities. Some charge a higher initial buy-in and a lower monthly fee. Some are partially refundable at move-out. A Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC) that most often includes assisted living may require payment separately for services and healthcare, such as care in the onsite nursing facility. But others may charge a much larger upfront fee, and you are guaranteed access to assisted living and nursing care.

What is a Community Fee?

Most assisted living communities charge a Community Fee. This can also be called a health assessment, entrance or administrative fee. This is a one-time payment covering the administrative cost of moving into a community. It may cover the initial health assessment of the resident, which is done by the community's nursing staff, the development of a service plan, and/or the cost of refurbishing an apartment.

What are Companion Suites?

Companion suite is a term used in assisted living and memory care communities to describe an apartment that would be occupied by two roommates. The layout of the suites differs from community to community. Some have a small, shared living area with a kitchenette. Some feature private bathrooms for each bedroom, while others have a shared bath. This option provides cost savings and can be a great choice for seniors who can't quite afford the senior community of their choice. It can also be a good choice for those who like the companionship. In either situation, the community would pair residents up based on common background or interests.

What are Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADLs)?

Instrumental Activities of Daily Living comprise the complex skills needed to successfully live independently, usually learned during one's teenage years. These include managing finances, transportation and driving, shopping, preparing meals, using a telephone, computer and other devices, managing medications, doing laundry and housework, and basic home maintenance.

What is a Service Plan?

A Service Plan may also be called a Care Plan or Wellness Plan. It is developed in consultation with the assisted living resident, and his or her family and physician. The service plan covers in detail the specific personal care services the resident needs and will receive. These customized services may include assistance with dressing, showering, using the toilet, getting ready for bed at night, and medication management. This plan is reviewed by the assisted living nursing staff usually every six months or sooner if the resident's care needs change. It should be made available to the resident's family and/or Health Care Proxy if requested.

What is a "Social Model"?

Assisted Living communities are referred to as a Social Model because they provide a wide range of services and amenities that support seniors' independence and offer them a vibrant social lifestyle. Seniors live in their own private apartment and have access to many shared community spaces, such as a dining room, living room, library, art rooms, and more. The range of personal care services in assisted living include help with dressing, bathing and medication management. Assisted living's "social model" is in contrast to the "medical model" of nursing homes that provide 24-hour intensive nursing services for seniors who have complex medical needs. Although assisted living staff do not directly provide skilled nursing, residents can contract with third-party agencies to provide these services in their apartment home, along with OT, PT, hospice services, and more.