Choosing Care in an Adult Family Home or Assisted Living Facility

This booklet provides information and resources on how to find and choose an adult family home or assisted living facility.

Washington State Department of Social and Health Services
Aging and Long-Term Support Administration

Are you looking for housing and care options for yourself or another person? There are many things to consider, terms that may be new, and housing and service conditions to explore prior to making a decision.

This booklet offers some steps to take and questions to ask to help you get the information you need to know if an adult family home or assisted living facility is the right option for you.

If you or a loved one need more care than you can get at home, it may be time to explore residential care. Residential care is a term used to describe a home or facility where an adult can live and get help with care in a community setting.

There are many residential care options that have become available over the last several years. Each type of residential care home offers different housing and care service options.

It is important for you to understand the differences in residential options available and have a good idea of what services are needed. You can then match your needs and preferences with a particular residential option.

This booklet describes two residential options: adult family homes and assisted living facilities. Both are licensed by Washington State.

There are other non-licensed housing options not covered in this booklet, including retirement communities and continuing care retirement communities. More information is available about these options through your local Senior Information and Assistance Office.
For more information, see page 5 or visit:
www.dshs.wa.gov/altsa.

Six steps to finding the right home for you:

Step 1:
Talk About Life Changes

Step 2:
Review Needs

Step 3:
Get the Information You Need

Step 4:
Get a List of Adult Family Homes and Assisted Living Facilities

Step 5:
Set up Visits

Step 6:
Make a Decision

What are Adult Family Homes and Assisted Living Facilities?

An adult family home (AFH) is licensed to provide housing and care for up to six adults in a regular house located in a residential neighborhood. The AFH may be run by a family, single person, or business partners. The AFH may also hire other employees. Some AFHs allow pets. In some homes, multiple languages are spoken.

An assisted living facility (ALF) is licensed to provide housing and care to seven or more people in a home or facility located in a residential neighborhood.

All AFHs and ALFs provide housing and meals (room and board) and assume general responsibility for the safety and care of the resident. Additional services may be offered, including:

- Varying levels of assistance with personal care.
- Intermittent nursing care (a nurse available on a part-time basis).
- Assistance with or administering of medications.

Some AFHs and ALFs also provide specialized care to people living with developmental disabilities, dementia, or mental illness.

This booklet outlines six steps that will help you get the information you need to decide if an adult family home or assisted living facility is the right choice for you.

Step 1: *Talk About Life Changes*

The first step in making long-term care decisions is for everyone involved to overcome their reluctance to talk about it. Many people put off this conversation because they are uncomfortable or unsure about how to bring it up. The person needing additional care may be reluctant to admit their changing needs. Family members can have differing opinions about what should happen. Miles can separate concerned loved ones.

No matter what the circumstance, fear and discomfort can leave everyone unprepared if a crisis occurs. Start talking now before an unexpected life crisis teaches you all the things you wished you had known ahead of time.

Tips for Talking About Life Changes

- Set aside time to talk when everyone is rested and prepared.
- Do some homework and have some knowledge about what types of housing and care services are available where you live.
- The person requiring additional care and support should have a central role in determining what is needed and how it is accomplished.
- Allow each person to talk without interruptions or criticizing.
- Understand emotions are a big part of this discussion.
- Be patient with the amount of time that may be needed to get things out on the table.
- Remember, it normally takes more than one conversation to figure out what to do. Do not try to tackle too many issues at once. Many small steps are better than one huge leap that leaves everyone upset and more confused.
- Stay positive. It is normal to find change difficult.
- Allow everyone time to think about everything discussed. If helping a loved one – remember you are making **recommendations** not decisions.

The wishes and preferences of the person who will live in the adult family home or assisted living facility are the most important part of this process.

Step 2: *Review Needs*

Carefully consider what care and help you, or your loved one, need. Make a list of medical, physical, and social needs.

For example:

- Does someone need to do laundry and cooking?
- Is help needed to get to the bathroom or dressing?
- Are regular medication reminders necessary?
- What type of help is needed so the person can stay socially connected?

Step 3: *Getting the Information You Need*

Much of the initial information gathering begins on the telephone. There are so many resources available it can be hard to know where to begin. It is helpful to know that it is a time consuming process for everyone. Plan accordingly.

Who to Call

Community Living Connections

There are local Community Living Connections (CLC) offices throughout Washington State. CLC provides information about local senior services in the community. CLC staff can assist with such things as what services may be available and their cost, names and addresses of local adult family homes and assisted living facilities, how to fill out forms, and how to find out about what benefits you may have.

CLC is part of your local Area Agency on Aging (AAA). To find the CLC or AAA office nearest you, go to www.waclc.org/connect. You can email the office directly, or find the local phone number. You may also call the statewide toll-free number at 1-855-567-0252.

Home and Community Services

If you think you may need state funding (Medicaid) to help pay for services, contact your local Home and Community Services (HCS) office. Call your regional HCS office and request an assessment. Phone numbers and locations for local offices are listed on back cover of this booklet.

Eldercare Locator

If you are looking for information and live outside of Washington State, the Eldercare Locator is an excellent resource to connect you with local services.

Call the Eldercare Locator at 1-800-677-1116. Full language service for 150 languages is available when you call. Or, visit them on the internet at www.eldercare.acl.gov.

Getting Services in Your Own Home

Although this booklet focuses on moving to an adult family home or assisted living facility, there are many services and resources available to help an adult get the care needed to continue to live at home. Any of the resources listed under "Who to Call" section of this booklet can also assist with in-home service options.

Another DSHS booklet, Medicaid and Long-Term Care Services for Adults (DSHS 22-619), describes many of the available in-home services. See page 14 for ordering information or go online to: www.dshs.wa.gov/sesa/publications-library and search by the publication name.

Step 4: *Get a List of Adult Family Homes and Assisted Living Facilities*

There is a wide range of adult family homes and assisted living facilities in Washington State. To begin finding the home that is a good fit for you or your loved one, visit: www.dshs.wa.gov/altsa/residential-care-services/long-term-care-residential-options.

This list provides the phone numbers and addresses of the facilities in the area requested. It also lists what contract (if any) the facility holds with the State to provide care for state-funded residents.

If you do not have a computer at home, check with your local library for access to one.

Your local Community Living Connections Office, Area Agency on Aging or Home and Community Services office can also provide a list of available options.

Step 5: *Set up Visits*

Once there is a list of possible homes, you need to visit homes that match your needs. This point is very important. Visit as many potential homes as you can at different times of the day.

Although setting up these visits may appear time consuming, in the long run it is worth taking this time to make the best decision. Visiting homes helps you compare the options available and get a good feel for what is available.

Find out more about the reputation of each home you visit by:

- Asking a representative from the home you are visiting to:
  - Show you the last state inspection report. This report will give you insight into any potential problem areas of the home. Give you a copy of the disclosure form that sets out the care and services that the assisted living facility offers. Provide references or numbers to contact former residents or their family members.
- Viewing any history of complaints against a facility by going online to: at www.dshs.wa.gov/altsa/long-term-care-professionals-providers. Under the "Find an Adult Family Home" or "Find an Assisted Living", reports will be listed for each facility.
- Contacting the local Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program for your area. Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program representatives are advocates for residents of residential care facilities. They work to resolve problems of individual residents and to bring about changes at the local, state, and national levels to improve care. They can be an excellent source of information.

  To find the office nearest you, call their toll-free number at 1-800-562-6028.

Step 6: *Make a Decision*

The following checklists will help you ask questions and get information to make your decision. Do not hesitate to ask as many questions as you need to make a choice that works for you. Although there are many questions here, the most important thing to ask is, "Does the adult family home or assisted living facility meet my needs?"

☑ Costs and Finances

- ☐ What is the basic rate for room, board, and services? (it is a good idea to get this information in writing)
  - ☐ What services are covered by this rate?
  - ☐ Are there other services available and how much do they cost?
  - ☐ What are the payment policies?
  - ☐ What is the refund policy if someone leaves before the end of a month?
  - ☐ What is the policy for rate increases?
- ☐ What is the policy for accepting Medicaid or transferring to Medicaid at a later date?
- ☐ There are important things to know if you think you will need Medicaid (state funds) to help pay for care now or in the future. For more information, read the DSHS booklet ***Medicaid and Long-Term Care Services for Adults*** (DSHS 22-619).

  Other sources of information are your local HCS office or an attorney who understands Medicaid rules. See the back of this booklet to learn how to order the Medicaid booklet and for the HCS office contact information.

Administration and Staff

- ☐ How long has the current administration been in place?
- ☐ Is there enough staff available to meet my needs?
- ☐ Is there frequent staff turnover?
- ☐ Is some level of nursing care provided (RN, LPN, Nursing Assistant)? How often is it available?
- ☐ Who will help me with medications if I need it (e.g. reminding me to take them, opening the bottle)?
- ☐ Can someone administer medications to me if I can not take them myself (e.g. applying medication to my skin, putting a pill in my mouth)?
- ☐ Can someone help me if I need special care (e.g. caring for a wound)?
- ☐ What happens if I have an emergency? Can I get help right away?
- ☐ Are staff suitably dressed, personable, and outgoing?
- ☐ Do the staff members treat residents with respect and dignity?
- ☐ Do staff members treat each other in a professional manner?
- ☐ What language does most of the staff speak?

Services and Activities

- [ ] What type of help with personal care is available (e.g. bathing, dressing)?
- [ ] How flexible is the schedule for receiving help with personal care?
- [ ] What, if any, transportation services are available? (e.g. medical appointments, shopping, religious services).
- [ ] Will staff arrange for activities (e.g. hair appointment, concert)?
- [ ] How does the home support and accommodate personal hobbies?
- [ ] Are there regularly planned activities that I will enjoy?
- [ ] Will I be able to attend religious services of my choice?
- [ ] Can I bring my pet with me when I move?

Surroundings

- [ ] As I arrive, do I like the location and outward appearance?
- [ ] Is the home close to friends and relatives?
- [ ] Is the home on a noisy street?
- [ ] Are there shops, a library, a park, or other amenities within walking distance?
- [ ] Is the home close to activities I enjoy?
- [ ] Is the home on a bus line?
- [ ] Is there an outside area to sit, walk, or garden?

Physical Setting

- [ ] Is the floor plan easy to follow?
- [ ] Are doorways, hallways, and rooms accommodating to wheelchairs and walkers?
- [ ] Are there hand rails to help with walking and in the bathroom?
- [ ] Are cupboards and shelves easy to reach?
- [ ] Are there nonskid floors and firm carpets to assist walking?
- [ ] Does the home have good natural and artificial lighting?
- [ ] Is the home clean, free of odors, and well heated and cooled?
- [ ] Does the home meet my standards of cleanliness?
- [ ] Is the home free from obvious environmental hazards?
- [ ] Are the home's rooms clean, safe, and adequate for my needs?
- [ ] Will I have free use of common areas, such as the kitchen, activity rooms, toilet facilities, dining room, or grounds?
- [ ] Can I smoke in my room or in common areas?
- [ ] What furniture is provided?
- [ ] Can I adjust the temperature of my room?
- [ ] Is there a sit-down shower?
- [ ] Can I have my own personal phone line or internet connection?
- [ ] Are emergency procedures clearly posted?
- [ ] Am I able to lock my room and/or are there locked areas in each room for personal valuables?

Food

- ☐ Is the food pleasing, nutritious, adequate, and attractively served?
- ☐ What if I do not like what is being served?
- ☐ Can I cook in my room?
- ☐ Are snacks available?
- ☐ Are there specific meal times or are they flexible?
- ☐ Is there a refrigerator available to store my personal food?
- ☐ Will the home meet my dietary or cultural food preferences?
- ☐ Can I request special foods?

Other Residents

- ☐ Do other residents socialize with each other and appear happy and comfortable?
- ☐ Do residents speak favorably of the facility?
- ☐ Do the residents look like people I want to live with?
- ☐ How are room changes and roommate concerns addressed?
- ☐ Is there a resident group that meets?
- ☐ Do any of the other residents have a history of violent or other problem behaviors? How are these situations handled by staff?

Once a Decision is Made

Planning and information gathering does not stop once you have made your decision to move into an adult family home or assisted living facility. Moving is a major life change. To help ease the transition, use some of the same steps defined in the first part of this booklet:

1. Talk through the changes that will need to be made.
2. Ask staff at the new residence for help with any questions you have.
3. Get any other additional information you need.
4. Make a plan of what needs to happen and when.

Moving to an adult family home or assisted living facility can mean letting go of a lifetime of possessions and a familiar way of life. Some people are relieved and look forward to fewer responsibilities while others find it emotional. Either way, the person making the move needs the full support of family and loved ones and should have the central role in determining what happens and when.

Once the move has happened, anticipate a normal period of adjustment. The first few weeks can be the hardest as routines get established and things become more familiar.

It is important to discuss any concerns or questions with the adult family home or assisted living facility administrator. **Be sure to ask for what you need**. The staff may be able to make changes that will better meet what works best for you.

As a resident of an adult family home or assisted living facility, you also have certain consumer rights guaranteed by law (Chapter 70.129 RCW). The owner or staff at your new residence should inform you of these rights. If not, ask.

Ordering Publications

You may order this booklet and other DSHS publications through the Department of Enterprise Services (DES) General Store.

Go to the DES's website at:

www.MyFulfillment.wa.gov

Publication requests may also be placed:

- By e-mail at printing@des.wa.gov
- By phone at (360) 664-4343
- By fax at (360) 586-6361

Make sure to include the name of the publication, publication number (DSHS 22-xxx), and a contact name and street mailing address for orders placed by e-mail, phone, or fax.

Visit:
www.dshs.wa.gov/altsa

To Find:

- Free brochures and booklets on caregiving and long-term care topics.
- Translated versions of publications.
- Telephone numbers and addresses of local offices working with seniors.
- A list of adult family homes, assisted living facilities, or nursing homes by county.
- Information, Resources, and Programs:
  - For caregivers.
  - On healthy aging.
  - On falls prevention.
  - On long-term care planning.

We are all partners against adult abuse

Abuse of vulnerable adults (people who need help to care for themselves) can happen anytime, anywhere. DSHS investigates alleged abuse, neglect, exploitation, or abandonment of vulnerable adults.

Call the telephone number listed below for help if you or someone you know is:

- Not being cared for properly.
- Being hurt physically, mentally, or sexually.
- Being financially exploited in any way.

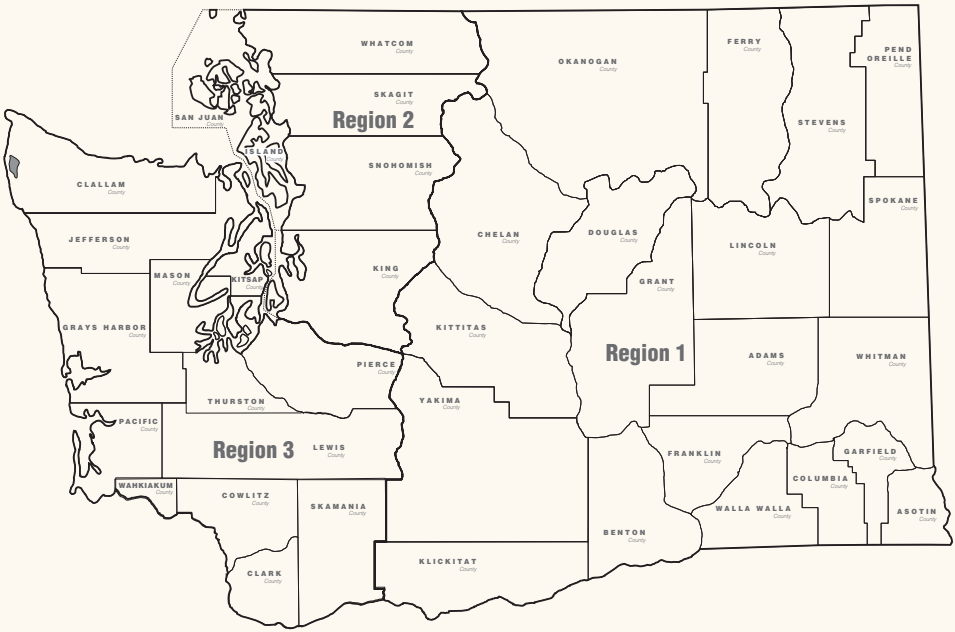
If you suspect abuse, neglect, or exploitation of a vulnerable adult:

Call DSHS toll-free

DSHS does not discriminate in serving or contracting with people because of race, color, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, age, religion, creed, marital status, disability, or Vietnam Era Veteran status, or the presence of any physical, mental, or sensory handicap.

Home and Community Services Regional Phone Numbers

See map to find the region you live in. Call the number listed for your region and ask for the local HCS office nearest you.



REGION 1

509-568-3700
1-800-459-0421

TTY 509-586-3697

Adams, Asotin, Benton, Chelan, Columbia, Douglas, Ferry, Franklin, Garfield, Grant, Kittitas, Klickitat, Lincoln, Okanogan, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens, Walla Walla, Whitman, and Yakima Counties

REGION 2

206-341-7600
1-800-346-9257

TTY 1-800-833-6384

Island, King, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, and Whatcom Counties

REGION 3

253-476-7200
1-800-442-5129

TTY 253-593-5471

Clallam, Clark, Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Jefferson, Kitsap, Lewis, Mason, Pacific, Pierce, Skamania, Thurston, and Wahkiakum Counties

Washington State
Department of Social
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