

# CONSUMER INFORMATION GUIDE: ASSISTED LIVING RESIDENCE

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## INTRODUCTION

This consumer information guide will help you decide if an assisted living residence is right for you and, if so, which type of assisted living residence (ALR) may best serve your needs.

There are many different housing, long-term care residential and community based options in New York State that provide assistance with daily living. The ALR is just one of the many residential community-based care options.

The New York State Department of Health's (DOH) website provides information about the different types of long-term care at [www.nyhealth.gov/facilities/long\\_term\\_care/](http://www.nyhealth.gov/facilities/long_term_care/).

More information about senior living choices is available on the New York State Office for the Aging website at [www.aging.ny.gov/ResourceGuide/Housing.cfm](http://www.aging.ny.gov/ResourceGuide/Housing.cfm).

A glossary for definitions of terms and acronyms used in this guide is provided on pages 10 and 11.

## WHAT IS AN ASSISTED LIVING RESIDENCE (ALR)?

An Assisted Living Residence is a certified adult home or enriched housing program that has additionally been approved by the DOH for licensure as an ALR. An operator of an ALR is required to provide or arrange for housing, twenty-four hour on-site monitoring, and personal care services and/or home care services in a home-like setting to five or more adult residents.

ALRs must also provide daily meals and snacks, case management services, and is required to develop an individualized service plan (ISP). The law also provides important consumer protections for people who reside in an ALR.

ALRs may offer each resident their own room, a small apartment, or a shared space with a suitable roommate. Residents will share common areas, such as the dining room or living room, with other people who may also require assistance with meals, personal care and/or home care services.

The philosophy of assisted living emphasizes personal dignity, autonomy, independence, privacy, and freedom of choice. Assisted living residences should facilitate independence and helps individuals to live as independently as possible and make decisions about how they want to live.

## WHO OPERATES ALRs?

ALRs can be owned and operated by an individual or a for-profit business group or corporation, a not-for-profit organization, or a government agency.

## PAYING FOR AN ALR

It is important to ask the ALR what kind of payment it accepts. Many ALRs accept private payment or long-term care insurance, and some accept Supplemental Security Income (SSI) as the primary method of payment. Currently, Medicaid and Medicare will NOT pay for residing in an ALR, although they may pay for certain medical services received while in the ALR.

Costs vary among ALRs. Much of the variation is due to the types and level of services provided and the location and structure of the residence itself.

## TYPES OF ALRs AND RESIDENT QUALIFICATIONS

There are three types of ALRs: Basic ALRs (ALR), Enhanced ALRs (EALR), and Special Need ALRs (SNALR). The services provided, offered or permitted vary by type and can vary from residence to residence. Prospective residents and their representatives should make sure they understand the type of ALR and be involved in the ISP process (described below), to ensure that the services to be provided are truly what the individual needs and desires.

**Basic ALR:** A Basic ALR takes care of residents who are medically stable. Residents need to have an annual physical exam, and may need routine medical visits provided by medical personnel onsite or in the community.

Generally, individuals who are appropriately served in a Basic ALR are those who:

- Prefer to live in a social and supportive environment with 24-hour supervision;
- Have needs that can be safely met in an ALR;
- May be visually or hearing impaired.
- May require some assistance with toileting, bathing, grooming, dressing or eating;
- Can walk or use a wheelchair alone or occasionally with assistance from another person, and can self-transfer;
- Can accept direction from others in time of emergency;
- Do not have a medical condition that requires 24-hour skilled nursing and medical care; or
- Do not pose a danger to themselves or others.

The Basic ALR is designed to meet the individual's social and residential needs, while also encouraging and assisting with activities of daily living (ADLs). However, a licensed ALR may also be certified as an Enhanced Assisted Living Residence (EALR) and/or Special Needs Assisted Living Residence (SNALR) and may provide additional support services as described below.

***Enhanced ALR (EALR):*** Enhanced ALRs are certified to offer an enhanced level of care to serve people who wish to remain in the residence as they have age-related difficulties beyond what a Basic ALR can provide. To enter an EALR, a person can “age in place” in a Basic ALR or enter directly from the community or another setting. If the goal is to “age-in-place,” it is important to ask how many beds are certified as enhanced and how your future needs will be met.

People in an Enhanced ALR may require assistance to get out of a chair, need the assistance of another to walk or use stairs, need assistance with medical equipment, and/or need assistance to manage chronic urinary or bowel incontinence.

An example of a person who may be eligible for the Enhanced ALR level of care is someone with a condition such as severe arthritis who needs help with meals and walking. If he or she later becomes confined to a wheelchair and needs help transferring, they can remain in the Enhanced ALR.

The Enhanced ALR must assure that the nursing and medical needs of the resident can be met in the facility. If a resident comes to need 24-hour medical or skilled nursing care, he/she would need to be transferred to a nursing facility or hospital unless all the criteria below are met:

- a) The resident hires 24-hour appropriate nursing and medical care to meet their needs;
- b) The resident's physician and home care services agency decide his/her care can be safely delivered in the Enhanced ALR;
- c) The operator agrees to provide services or arrange for services and is willing to coordinate care; and
- d) The resident agrees with the plan.

***Special Needs ALR (SNALR):*** Some ALRs may also be certified to serve people with special needs, for example Alzheimer’s disease or other types of dementia. Special Needs ALRs have submitted plans for specialized services, environmental features, and staffing levels that have been approved by the New York State Department of Health.

The services offered by these homes are tailored to the unique needs of the people they serve. Sometimes people with dementia may not need the more specialized services required in a Special Needs ALR, however, if the degree of dementia requires that the person be in a secured environment, or services must be highly specialized to address their needs, they may need the services and environmental features only available in a Special Needs ALR. The individual’s physician and/or representative and ALR staff can help the person decide the right level of services.

An example of a person who could be in a Special Needs ALR, is one who develops dementia with associated problems, needs 24-hour supervision, and needs additional help completing his or her activities of daily living. The Special Needs ALR is required to have a specialized plan to address the person’s behavioral changes caused by dementia. Some of these changes may present a danger to the person or others in the Special Needs ALR. Often such residents are provided medical, social or neuro-behavioral care. If the symptoms become unmanageable despite modifications to the care plan, a person may need to move to another level of care where his or her needs can be safely met. The ALR’s case manager is responsible to assist residents to find the right residential setting to safely meet their needs.

*Comparison of Types of ALRs*

	<b>ALR</b>	<b>EALR</b>	<b>SNALR</b>
Provides a furnished room, apartment or shared space with common shared areas	X	X	X
Provides assistance with 1-3 meals daily, personal care, home care, housekeeping, maintenance, laundry, social and recreational activities	X	X	X
Periodic medical visits with providers of resident choice are arranged	X	X	X
Medication management assistance	X	X	X
24 hour monitoring by support staff is available on site	X	X	X
Case management services	X	X	X
Individualized Service Plan (ISP) is prepared	X	X	X
Assistance with walking, transferring, stair climbing and descending stairs, as needed, is available		X	
Intermittent or occasional assistance from medical personnel from approved community resources is available	X	X	X
Assistance with durable medical equipment (i.e., wheelchairs, hospital beds) is available			X
Nursing care (i.e. vital signs, eye drops, injections, catheter care, colostomy care, wound care, as needed) is provided by an agency or facility staff		X	
Aging in place is available, and, if needed, 24 hour skilled nursing and/or medical care can be privately hired		X	
Specialized program and environmental modifications for individuals with dementia or other special needs			X

## HOW TO CHOOSE AN ALR

**VISITING ALRs:** Be sure to visit several ALRs before making a decision to apply for residence. Look around, talk to residents and staff and ask lots of questions. Selecting a home needs to be comfortable.

Ask to examine an “open” or “model” unit and look for features that will support living safely and independently. If certain features are desirable or required, ask building management if they are available or can be installed. Remember charges may be added for any special modifications requested.

It is important to keep in mind what to expect from a residence. It is a good idea to prepare a list of questions before the visit. Also, taking notes and writing down likes or dislike about each residence is helpful to review before making a decision.

**THINGS TO CONSIDER:** When thinking about whether a particular ALR or any other type of community-based housing is right, here are some things to think about before making a final choice.

**Location:** Is the residence close to family and friends?

**Licensure/Certification:** Find out the type of license/certification a residence has and if that certification will enable the facility to meet current and future needs.

**Costs:** How much will it cost to live at the residence? What other costs or charges, such as dry cleaning, cable television, etc., might be additional? Will these costs change?

**Transportation:** What transportation is available from the residence? What choices are there for people to schedule outings other than to medical appointments or trips by the residence or other group trips? What is within safe walking distance (shopping, park, library, bank, etc.)?

**Place of worship:** Are there religious services available at the residence? Is the residence near places of worship?

**Social organizations:** Is the residence near civic or social organizations so that active participation is possible?

**Shopping:** Are there grocery stores or shopping centers nearby? What other type of shopping is enjoyed?

**Activities:** What kinds of social activities are available at the residence? Are there planned outings which are of interest? Is participation in activities required?

**Other residents:** Other ALR residents will be neighbors, is this a significant issue or change from current living arrangement?

**Staff:** Are staff professional, helpful, knowledgeable and friendly?

**Resident Satisfaction:** Does the residence have a policy for taking suggestions and making improvements for the residents?

**Current and future needs:** Think about current assistance or services as well as those needed in several years. Is there assistance to get the services needed from other agencies or are the services available on site?

If the residence offers fewer Special Needs beds and/or Enhanced Assisted Living beds than the total capacity of the residence, how are these beds made available to current or new residents? Under what conditions require leaving the residence, such as for financial or for health reasons? Will room or apartment changes be required due to health changes? What is the residence's policy if the monthly fee is too high or if the amount and/or type of care needs increase?

**Medical services:** Will the location of the facility allow continued use of current medical personnel?

**Meals:** During visit, eat a meal. This will address the quality and type of food available. If, for cultural or medical reasons, a special diet is required, can these types of meals be prepared?

**Communication:** If English is not the first language and/or there is some difficulty communicating, is there staff available to communicate in the language necessary? If is difficulty hearing, is there staff to assist in communicating with others?

**Guests:** Are overnight visits by guests allowed? Does the residence have any rules about these visits? Can a visitor dine and pay for a meal? Is there a separate area for private meals or gatherings to celebrate a special occasion with relatives?

**WHO CAN HELP YOU CHOOSE AN ALR?** When deciding on which ALR is right, talk to family members and friends. If they make visits to the residences, they may see something different, so ask for feedback.

Physicians may be able to make some recommendations about things that should be included in any residence. A physician who knows about health needs and is aware of any limitations can provide advice on your current and future needs.

Before making any final decisions, talking to a financial advisor and/or attorney may be appropriate. Since there are costs involved, a financial advisor may provide information on how these costs may affect your long term financial outlook. An attorney review of any documents may also be valuable. (e.g., residency agreement, application, etc.).

## **ADMISSION CRITERIA AND INDIVIDUALIZED SERVICE PLANS (ISP)**

An evaluation is required before admission to determine eligibility for an ALR. The admission criteria can vary based on the type of ALR. Applicants will be asked to provide results of a physical exam from within 30 days prior to admission that includes a medical, functional, and mental health assessment (where appropriate or required). This assessment will be reviewed as part of the Individualized Service Plan (ISP) that an ALR must develop for each resident.

The ISP is the “blueprint” for services required by the resident. It describes the services that need to be provided to the resident, and how and by whom those services will be provided. The ISP is developed when the resident is admitted to the ALR, with the input of the resident and his or her representative, physician, and the home health care agency, if appropriate. Because it is based on the medical, nutritional, social and everyday life needs of the individual, the ISP must be reviewed and revised as those needs change, but at least every six months.

## APPLYING TO AN ALR

The following are part of entering an ALR:

***An Assessment:*** Medical, Functional and Mental: A current physical examination that includes a medical, functional and mental health evaluation (where appropriate or required) to determine what care is needed. This must be completed by a physician 30 days prior to admission. Check with staff at the residence for the required form.

***An application*** and any other documents that must be signed at admission (get these from the residence). Each residence may have different documents. Review each one of them and get the answers to any questions.

***Residency Agreement*** (contract): All ALR operators are required to complete a residency agreement with each new resident at the time of admission to the ALR. The ALR staff must disclose adequate and accurate information about living in that residence. This agreement determines the specific services that will be provided and the cost. The residency agreement must include the type of living arrangements agreed to (e.g., a private room or apartment); services (e.g., dining, housekeeping); admission requirements and the conditions which would require transfer; all fees and refund policies; rules of the residence, termination and discharge policies; and resident rights and responsibilities.

Review the residency agreement very carefully. There may be differences in each ALR's residency agreement, but they have to be approved by the Department. Write down any questions or concerns and discuss with the administrator of the ALR. Contact the Department of Health with questions about the residency agreement. (See number under information and complaints)

***Disclosure Statement:*** This statement includes information that must be made known to an individual before signing the residency agreement. This information should include: licensure, ownership, availability of health care providers, availability of public funds, the State Health Department toll-free number for reporting complaints, and a statement regarding the availability and telephone numbers of the state and local long-term care ombudsman services. The disclosure statement should be reviewed carefully.

***Financial Information:*** Ask what types of financial documents are needed (bank statements, long term care insurance policies, etc.). Decide how much financing is needed in order to qualify to live in the ALR. Does the residence require a deposit or fee before moving in? Is the fee refundable, and, if so, what are the conditions for the refund?

***Before Signing Anything:*** Review all agreements before signing anything. A legal review of the documents may provide greater understanding. Understand any long term care insurance benefits. Consider a health care proxy or other advance directive, making decision about executing a will or granting power of attorney to a significant other may be appropriate at this time.

***Resident Rights, Protection, and Responsibilities:*** New York State law and regulations guarantee ALR residents' rights and protections and define their responsibilities. Each ALR operator must adopt a statement of rights and responsibilities for residents, and treat each resident according to the principles in the statement. For a list of ALR resident rights and responsibilities visit the Department's website at [http://www.nyhealth.gov/facilities/assisted\\_living/docs/resident\\_rights.pdf](http://www.nyhealth.gov/facilities/assisted_living/docs/resident_rights.pdf). For a copy of an individual ALR's statement of rights and responsibilities, ask the ALR.

## LICENSING AND OVERSIGHT

ALRs and other adult care facilities are licensed and inspected every 12 to 18 months by the New York State Department of Health. An ALR is required to follow rules and regulations and to renew its license every two years. For a list of licensed ALRs in NYS, visit the Department of Health's website at [www.nyhealth.gov/facilities/assisted\\_living/licensed\\_programs\\_residences.htm](http://www.nyhealth.gov/facilities/assisted_living/licensed_programs_residences.htm).

## INFORMATION AND COMPLAINTS

For more information about assisted living residences or to report concerns or problems with a residence which cannot be resolved internally, call the New York State Department of Health or the New York State Long Term Care Ombudsman Program. The New York State Department of Health's Division of Assisted Living can be reached at (518) 408-1133 or toll free at 1-866-893-6772. The New York State Long Term Care Ombudsman Program can be reached at 1-855-582-6769.

## Glossary of Terms Related to Guide

**Activities of Daily Living (ADL):** Physical functions that a person performs every day that usually include dressing, eating, bathing, toileting, and transferring.

**Adult Care Facility (ACF):** Provides temporary or long-term, non-medical, residential care services to adults who are to a certain extent unable to live independently. There are five types of adult care facilities: adult homes, enriched housing programs, residences for adults, family-type homes and shelters for adults. Of these, adult homes, enriched housing programs, and residences for adults are overseen by the Department of Health. Adult homes, enriched housing programs, and residences for adults provide long-term residential care, room, board, housekeeping, personal care and supervision. Enriched housing is different because each resident room is an apartment setting, i.e. kitchen, larger living space, etc. Residences for adults provide the same services as adult homes and enriched housing except for required personal care services.

**Adult Day Program:** Programs designed to promote socialization for people with no significant medical needs who may benefit from companionship and supervision. Some programs provide specially designed recreational and therapeutic activities, which encourage and improve daily living skills and cognitive abilities, reduce stress, and promote capabilities.

**Adult Day Health Care:** Medically-supervised services for people with physical or mental health impairment (examples: children, people with dementia, or AIDS patients). Services include: nursing, transportation, leisure activities, physical therapy, speech pathology, nutrition assessment, occupational therapy, medical social services, psychosocial assessment, rehabilitation and socialization, nursing evaluation and treatment, coordination of referrals for outpatient health, and dental services.

**Aging in Place:** Accommodating a resident's changing needs and preferences to allow the resident to remain in the residence as long as possible.

**Assisted Living Program (ALP):** Available in some adult homes and enriched housing programs. It combines residential and home care services. It is designed as an alternative to nursing home placement for some people. The operator of the assisted living program is responsible for providing or arranging for resident services that must include room, board, housekeeping, supervision, personal care, case management and home health services.

This is a Medicaid funded service for personal care services.

**Disclosure Statement:** Information made known to an individual before signing the residency agreement. This information should include: licensure, ownership, availability of health care providers, availability of public funds, the State Health Department toll-free number for reporting complaints, and a statement regarding the availability and telephone numbers of the state and local long-term care ombudsman services.

**Health Care Facility:** All hospitals and nursing homes licensed by the New York State Department of Health.

**Health Care Proxy:** Appointing a health care agent to make health care decisions for you and to make sure your wishes are followed if you lose the ability to make these decisions yourself.

**Home Care:** Health or medically related services provided by a home care services agency to people in their homes, including adult homes, enriched housing, and ALRs. Home care can meet many needs, from help with household chores and personal care like dressing, shopping, eating and bathing, to nursing care and physical, occupational, or speech therapy.

**Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADL's):** Functions that involve managing one's affairs and performing tasks of everyday living, such as preparing meals, taking medications, walking outside, using a telephone, managing money, shopping and housekeeping.

**Long Term Care Ombudsman Program:** A statewide program administered by the New York State Office for the Aging. It has local coordinators and certified ombudsmen who help resolve problems of residents in adult care facilities, assisted living residences, and skilled nursing facilities. In many cases, a New York State certified ombudsman is assigned to visit a facility on a weekly basis.

**Monitoring:** Observing for changes in physical, social, or psychological well being.

**Personal Care:** Services to assist with personal hygiene, dressing, feeding, and household tasks essential to a person's daily living.

**Rehabilitation Center:** A facility that provides occupational, physical, audiology, and speech therapies to restore physical function as much as possible and/or help people adjust or compensate for loss of function.

**Supplemental Security Income (SSI):** A federal income supplement program funded by general tax revenues (not Social Security taxes). It is designed to help aged, blind, and disabled people, who have little or no income; and it provides cash to meet basic needs for food, clothing and shelter. Some, but not all, ALRs may accept SSI as payment for food and shelter services.

**Supervision:** Knowing the general whereabouts of each resident, monitoring residents to identify changes in behavior or appearance and guidance to help residents to perform basic activities of daily living.



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