

3 6 Assisted Living Food regulations to Consider

6 The Value of Working with an ALCA Professional



living INDEPENDENT

The Newsletter of INDEPENDENT YOU Senior Services

Summer 2025 Vol. 9 Issue 2



9 Myths About Assisted Living

Not everything you know about assisted living is true. Join us as we debunk 9 assisted living myths.

If you're looking at retirement communities for yourself or a family member, it can be hard to know what all the terms — independent living, assisted living, skilled nursing — for different living options mean. And if you've only visited a community either to see a parent or grandparent, you may not realize how much they've evolved. But for those who haven't been to a community in decades, myths about senior living communities — especially myths

about assisted living — persist. This blog post will look at some common assisted living myths and offer some facts about what assisted living communities offer.

Not your stereotypical lifestyle.

Until you actually experience something for yourself, many of us have to rely on popular culture portrayals for information. Think of the way older adults have been portrayed through the years in the movies, in commercials and on TV shows. With aging, like living in an assisted living community, the popular culture stereotype doesn't always match real-world

experience. Here are some common myths about assisted living and the reality:

MYTH #1: Assisted living equals a nursing home.

REALITY: Assisted living communities help with activities of daily living — like getting dressed and bathing — that may be difficult or dangerous to do on your own. They also provide meals, medication monitoring, housekeeping, activities and social events. Nursing homes and other skilled nursing communities help with chronic health issues that require closer attention and around-the-clock care from medical professionals.

MYTH #2: I'll lose my independence.

REALITY: You can decorate your residence, eat when you want, do the activities that interest you, and even visit with friends and family. If you decide to do some traveling, the community will look after everything while you're away. In fact, assisted living communities are designed to help you maintain your independence for as long as possible.

MYTH #3: It's too expensive.

REALITY: When you consider everything you may need to do to your house to make it easier for you to get around — widening doorways, taking out steps, hiring a caregiver — staying at home can cost much more in the long run. And assisted living communities take care of all inside and outside maintenance and repairs, property taxes, and most cover all your utilities and provide meals. Plus, you have 24/7 access to their highly trained staff, if needed.

MYTH #4: I'll be stuck at the community.

REALITY: Most assisted living com-

munities offer complimentary transportation for shopping, social events and scheduled doctors' appointments. If you're a licensed driver, you can still use your own vehicle and be provided with a parking space.

MYTH #5: There's no privacy.

REALITY: Most assisted living communities offer a variety of apartment floor plans you can furnish and decorate however you'd like. Plus, you'll only have visitors when you want them — and staff will only enter your apartment with your prior knowledge and consent.

MYTH #6: I have to stick to a schedule.

REALITY: While assisted living communities offer a calendar full of engaging activities and events — like yoga classes, crafting classes, sports and board games — you always have the freedom to participate in as many, or as few, activities as you want to.

MYTH #7: I'll be lonely and bored there.

REALITY: Assisted living communities are full of interesting neighbors, so you're sure to find someone who shares your interests. Plus, there are a variety of clubs, volunteer groups and other activities to attend. In fact, some residents say they've never been busier.

MYTH #8: I won't like the food.

REALITY: Almost every assisted living community offers a broad variety of delicious menu options that are also nutritious. You'll also likely find a number of diverse chef-prepared meals on the menu every day. However, as you tour communities, be sure to ask to try the food and confirm what choices they offer.

MYTH #9: I have to be sick or disabled.

REALITY: Yes, there may be licensed nurses on staff, but assisted living is for seniors who are independent and only need limited care. If you ever need higher levels of care — like skilled nursing or rehabilitation — you'll work with your community to get the care that's appropriate for you.

Where You Live Matters is powered by the American Seniors Housing Association (ASHA), a respected voice in the senior housing industry. ASHA primarily focuses on legislative and regulatory advocacy, research, and educational opportunities and networking for senior living executives, so they can better understand the needs of older adults across the country.



6 Assisted Living Food Regulations to Consider

By Matt Stenerson

Health and safety are top priorities in any senior living community. Operators often focus on minimizing medication errors and ensuring that caregiving professionals adhere to each resident's care plan. Communities can also protect residents' well-being by providing high-quality dining services that comply with assisted living food regulations.

Many laws and industry standards govern food preparation and handling in assisted living communities. Ad-

hering to these regulations requires careful attention to detail and proper training for dining services staff. This guide covers six essential laws for assisted living communities and strategies to ensure compliance.

Key Assisted Living Food Regulations

Food regulations govern every aspect of senior living dining services, from menu planning to pest management. These laws safeguard residents' health and autonomy. Here are six regulations communities must follow

to remain compliant and provide the best dining experiences for residents.

1. Safe Food Handling Practices

No one wants to eat chicken that hasn't been thoroughly cooked or vegetables that have been chopped on a dirty cutting board. But residents often have medical conditions and weakened immune responses that make them particularly vulnerable to foodborne illnesses caused by bacteria and other contaminants.

2. State and Local Health Code Regulations

All 50 states and many local counties have health departments. These organizations create and enforce health code regulations for assisted living communities and other businesses in their jurisdictions. Most health departments model their rules on the FDA's Food Code.

However, some jurisdictions have implemented unique food safety laws. For example, Massachusetts passed the Food Allergy Awareness Act in 2009. This law requires food service establishments to post an allergen awareness poster and employ a food protection manager with allergen awareness training.

3. Staff Food Safety Training

Many food safety protocols seem like common sense, but memorizing every applicable law and rule can take time and effort. That's why states require senior dining staff to receive regular food safety training. Requirements vary by state but may include:

Food Safety Manager Certification: Staff who work in food services management may need to complete a training program accredited by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI).

Food Handler Certificate: Many states require staff who work with food to take an ANSI-accredited food handling program and earn a certification.

4. Residents Must Be Able To Choose Their Food

Federal and state laws protect the autonomy and rights of senior living residents. Code of Food Regulation § 483.60 requires communities that accept Medicaid and Medicare to follow specific food regulations, including:

Meaningful Choices: Residents must be free to choose their meals based on their food habits, preferences, and dietary needs. eMenuCHOICE streamlines this process by allowing residents to order from digital food menus, customize their meals, and request food substitutions.

Meal Frequency: Communities must provide at least three nutritious meals per day at normal mealtimes and snacks. The evening meal and breakfast must be served no more than 14 hours apart unless the resident receives a snack and agrees to a meal span of up to 16 hours.

Nutritional Intake: Dining staff must provide nutritious meals and accommodate therapeutic diets prescribed by a physician or licensed dietitian.

Updated Assisted Living Menus: Dining professionals must periodically update their menus. Communities must also inform residents of menu changes at least a week in advance.

5. On-Site Qualified Food Service Manager

Assisted living dining services need expert oversight to comply with all regulations and provide excellent care. CFR § 483.60 requires all communities to employ a full-time dietitian or

nutrition specialist. If a community doesn't have one of these professionals on staff, they can have a director of food and nutrition services. This director can be a certified dietary manager or have specific educational credentials in food service management.

6. Pest Control Program To Prevent Food Contamination

Insects, rodents, and other pests can ruin food, sicken residents, and horrify anyone who sees them inside the building. CFR § 483.90 requires senior living communities to maintain a pest control program to prevent these issues.

CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE: Our Caregivers of the Month 2025

At Independent You, Inc., we are honored to recognize the unwavering commitment, compassion, and professionalism of our exceptional caregivers.

Their dedication lies at the very heart of the care we provide, and we are deeply grateful for the meaningful impact they make each and every day.

We are proud to congratulate our 2025 Caregivers of the Month:

- **January – Agatha G.**
3 years of dedicated service
- **February – Binta B.**
11 years of outstanding care
- **March – Janet B.**
6 years of compassionate support
- **April – Kelalle M.**
2 years of heartfelt service
- **May – Olufemi G.**
3 years of exemplary commitment

These incredible individuals exemplify what it means to go above and beyond in caregiving. Their reliability, empathy, and professionalism make them true standouts in their field—and we are immensely proud to have them as part of the Independent You family.

To all our caregivers: thank you. We are so grateful for your tireless work and the compassionate care you deliver every day.

Together, we are making a difference.



Agatha G.



Binta B.



Janet B.



Kelalle M.



Olu G.

AGING (i)fe CARE®

A S S O C I A T I O N

The Value of Working with an Aging Life Care Professional®

ALCA is excited to release new findings from research conducted by the Florida Chapter of the Aging Life Care Association. Florida researchers first studied how care recipients valued the services provided by Aging Life Care Professionals. The results from the second phase considered the value of services as viewed by the “responsible party” authorized to pay for Aging Life Care™ services on behalf of an individual.

FINDINGS

97% of Responsible Party respondents felt that engaging an Aging Life Care Manager had a positive overall effect on the client.

99% said that engaging Aging Life Care Manager Services had a positive effect on their own lives.

Responsible Parties cited **keeping them informed** about the client’s status as the most common Care Manager function, followed by **emergency management** and **medical management**. All these services work together to set the Responsible Parties’ minds at ease.

The value of Aging Life Care Professional services is evident. With the increasing aging population and the emphasis on continuity of care, Aging Life Care Professionals are poised to play a larger role in coming years.

“Aging Life Care Professionals” (sometimes called “Aging Life Care Managers™”, “Aging Life Care Specialists™”, “geriatric care managers” or “GCMs”) – have emerged as resources for families – they are able to relieve the caregiver burden, are often engaged by families separated by distance, and understand the complexity of the healthcare system.

Phase Two study results – How responsible parties value Aging Life Care Professionals’ services by Mary Ann Home, MPA & Judith Otiz, PhD, MBA – were published in the Journal of Aging Life Care, Vol. 27, Special Edition, March 2017.
Phase One study results – The Role and Contributions of Geriatric Care Managers: Care Recipients’ Views – were published in Professional Case Management, Vol. 18, No. 6, pages 286-292, in November/December 2013.

Overwhelmingly, the survey indicated that engaging Aging Life Care Professionals had positive effects for the responsible parties and the clients served. Among the most common benefits cited were:

Getting an objective assessment of a client’s needs,

Knowing the client has a medical advocate,

Simply contributing to peace of mind.

While 7 out of 10 adults are expected to need assistance as they age, scholars in the aging field perceive it is unrealistic to continue to rely so heavily on family caregivers because of their declining future numbers, the complexity of the healthcare system, and competing responsibilities for modern families (Bragg, 2015; Redfoot, 2013).

Why and How the Aging Life Care Professional was Chosen

Most respondents reported they engaged the professional because:

- family did not live near the client so that they needed a local contact for care,
- concerned about changes in the client's status,
- client was experiencing a crisis at the time the professional services were sought,
- seeking a professional assessment to explore options for the client's care.

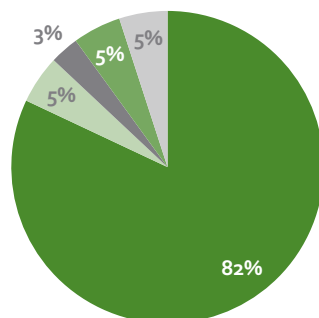
"Other" situations that led to engaging care:

- caregiver had a crisis,
- needed guidance navigating options for dementia/Alzheimer's care,
- family dissension.

The responsible parties' perceptions can be valuable in the field of elder care, by showing which professional services are most important to informal caregivers – in this case, often family members who live at a distance from the older adult. Since Aging Life Care Professionals may be experienced in one or more of several fields – including social work, nursing, gerontology or psychology – they can assist with a broad range of services (ALCA, 2016). The ways responsible parties use and value the Aging Life Care Professionals' services can have a significant impact on the older clients and their families, as well as on service providers.

An unexpected finding was the extent to which Aging Life Care Professionals work outside the client's home — in an assisted living facility or nursing homes.

According to our survey responses, many families depend on Aging Life Care Professionals even after the client has left home for a facility. In fact, almost half the respondents (47%) said the clients with whom they are associated do not live at home.



Survey Respondents

- Family Members
- Trust Officer
- Attorney
- Professional Guardian
- Other

Most Common Services Performed by Aging Life Care Professionals

Assessing, monitoring and updating responsible party on client's needs

Managing crises, safety concerns or conflicts in the client's life

Advocating and coordinating for the client's medical concerns

Providing support and services that preserve the client's independence

Offering activities that enhance the client's social support and quality of life

Providing impaired memory support and services



Visit Find an Aging Life Care Expert for qualified, experienced professionals at aginglifecare.org

3275 W. Ina Road, Suite 130 | Tucson, AZ 85741
p 520.881.8008 • f 520.325.7925

Services Most Valuable to Responsible Parties
Providing me peace of mind
Assessing client's needs
Preventing/managing crises
Advocating for medical needs with providers
Preserving client's independence
Navigating/recommending community resources
Managing residential transition
Mediating/resolving conflicts
Providing memory care/support

Services Most Valuable to the Clients
Monitoring/advocating for medical needs
Providing peace of mind by being on call
Coordinating/monitoring service providers
Providing counseling and emotional support
Enhancing social and quality-of-life activities
Making/recommending home safety changes
Providing memory care/support
Coordinating government assistance, insurance or other benefits



703-999-3006 or visit us online at
independentyouseniorservices.com



*Providing
personalized,
senior care
and care
management
services for
seniors who
wish to remain
independent*



9489 A silver king court
fairfax, va. 22031