



Empire State Association of Assisted Living

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Important Information for Consumers about Assisted Living Residences (ALRs) and Enhanced Assisted Living Residence (EALR) Certification

In New York State, all Assisted Living Residences (ALRs) are not the same. While ALRs must in general follow the same regulations and provide similar services, there can be differences. Consumers enjoy options and choice because of the variation; however, when seeking an assisted living setting consumers must be educated and ask important questions. The variation in services offered can be most stark in those ALRs that hold an additional certification known as the **Enhanced ALR, or EALR**.

Some, but not all, New York State Department of Health-licensed ALRs hold the EALR certification. The EALR enables the assisted living provider to accommodate seniors that need services beyond what an ALR without EALR certification can provide. Examples of EALR services are assistance from a staff person to walk, get in/out of a chair, operate medical equipment such as oxygen, and skilled services provided by on-staff nurses.

Services vary among different EALRs: NYS law does not dictate what services each EALR must offer and provide. Rather, each EALR provider develops, for Department of Health approval, a list of services based on staffing capabilities and the needs and preferences of their resident population. For example, one EALR located in Albany, NY may provide on-staff nursing services, but not one-on-one assistance with walking, while another EALR in Albany may offer ambulation and transfer assistance, but not direct nursing. Still another EALR may not only provide one-on-one ambulation and transfer assistance, but also the assistance of two staff persons. Likewise, some EALRs opt to admit seniors with these increased needs while others offer the enhanced services only to those already living in the Assisted Living Residence. There are good reasons why the law allows for these types of variances: Assisted living is not “one-size-fits-all”. Some seniors prefer living in an assisted living setting where they will be able to continue to receive services up to 24-hour skilled nursing care. Others prefer to live in a setting where the people living there are more independent.

While there are good reasons for the difference in services provided in each EALR, it can be confusing for the consumer as they compare residences to determine the place best suited for them. Therefore, when exploring EALR settings, it is critical to discuss some key issues with the EALR provider:

✚ **What are the specific EALR services that you are authorized to provide?**

- Typically the EALR provider includes the list of services within the Residency Agreement and/or in other format. Request a copy of the list.
- **Ask for more detail as needed.** For instance, if they provide assistance with walking, is it only one-person assistance or two-person assistance as well? If they provide direct nursing, what are the specific nursing tasks that they do, and do not, provide?

✚ **Does the EALR admit people with some or all of these advanced needs, or only provide them to someone already living in the residence?**

- The answer may differ based on each EALR service offered and if so, specify for each.

✚ **Is the entire building certified as EALR, or only a certain number (if so, how many)?**

✚ **How many vacancies are in the EALR now and how are residents notified when this number changes?**

✚ **What, specifically, would create a need for the resident to be discharged from the residence?**

Last, always be sure to verify that the building and services are licensed by the NYS Department of Health. If the building is not licensed, important consumer protections and safety could be lacking.

This information is provided by the Empire State Association of Assisted Living (ESAAL), a not-for-profit organization dedicated to strengthening New York State's assisted living network and promoting the best interests of providers and residents. Founded in 1979, ESAAL currently serves more than 300 Assisted Living Residences, Adult Homes and Enriched Housing Programs throughout New York State. These member residences are home to more than 28,000 seniors. Visit us at www.esaal.org.