

**THE QUESTIONS
COMMUNITIES
HOPE YOU NEVER ASK**



TIM JONES

YOUR ASSISTED LIVING COACH

PART 1

Staffing & Safety

- What's your staff-to-resident ratio at night and on weekends?
- How many caregivers are on shift in memory care during nights?
- What's your average staff turnover in the past year?

Reputation & Stability

- Who owns this community, is it privately held, regional, or national?
- How many times has management changed in the past 3–5 years?
- Can I see your most recent state inspection report?
- How do you handle complaints or negative reviews?

Control

- What specifically makes this community the right fit for my loved one's needs right now?
- If you're referring me to another community, why that one instead of others in the area?
- What would you say are the limitations of this community for my loved one's care?
- If my loved one's needs change, what's the process and cost of transitioning within or outside this building?

PART 2: DEVELOPING YOUR OWN QUESTIONS

The Essential Questions protect you from the most common traps. But here's the truth: even the best list won't help if you haven't clarified what your family actually wants and needs.

Communities can't answer what you never ask.

Use these prompts to define your own priorities before you step into a tour or sign any paperwork.

Daily Life Priorities

- What does my loved one's "perfect day" look like?
- Which activities or routines truly improve their quality of life?
- What would feel like a deal-breaker if it were missing?

Medical Needs

- Which conditions (memory loss, diabetes, mobility issues) are top of mind right now?
- What changes might we realistically face in the next 6–12 months?
- What medical services do we expect a community to handle directly, versus outside providers?

Social & Emotional Fit

- Does my loved one thrive in large group activities, or prefer quieter settings?

- How important are spiritual, cultural, or language-based connections?
- How much interaction do they need with staff to feel secure?

Budget & Longevity

- Based on current savings and income, how many years can we comfortably afford this community?
- What happens financially if care costs increase by 20% over the next few years?
- Are we planning for one move, or do we need to leave room for future transitions?

Family Involvement

- How close does the community need to be to home, work, or school?
- How often will we realistically visit?
- What role do we want to play in care decisions day-to-day?



The families who sit down and answer these prompts before a tour have an advantage most never will: clarity. They don't just react to what the community shows them; they measure it against what actually matters to them. That's where true leverage lives.

PART 3: DEMENTIA-SPECIFIC SAFEGUARDS

When dementia or memory care is part of the picture, the stakes rise fast. Many communities say “we can handle that” during the sales pitch. But the reality only shows up later...when behaviors, safety, or staff training don’t match the promise. These questions help you get clarity before it’s too late.

Safety & Security

- How are exits secured, and how often are alarms tested?
- What is your protocol if a resident tries to leave (elopes)?
- How many staff are trained in dementia-specific crisis response on each shift?

Progressive Care Options

- Does your community have a progressive model (assisted living on one side, memory care on the other)?
- If my loved one starts in assisted living but shows early dementia signs, can they transition smoothly into memory care?
- What are the costs and processes for transitioning within the same community?

Assessment Clarity

- Can you show me what criteria you’re using to recommend memory care vs. assisted living?

- What specific behaviors or needs triggered your recommendation?

Medical Input

- Has my loved one's doctor given a recommendation for memory care yet?
- Can we share their medical records with your assessment team before deciding?
- How often do you re-check whether someone belongs in assisted living or memory care?

Emergencies & Calamities

- What is your evacuation plan in case of fire or natural disaster?
- How do you ensure residents with mobility issues are evacuated safely?
- Where are residents taken if the building becomes uninhabitable?
- How often do you run fire or disaster drills, and who participates?
- What backup systems do you have for power, food, and medication storage during outages?

Bottom Line

Not every senior with dementia needs memory care right away. Some do. Some don't. The difference comes down to safety risks, daily support needs, and how well the community's staff can actually deliver on their promises. Ask the questions,

get the doctor's input, and don't let fear or pressure rush your decision.

Closing Note

Asking questions isn't just about information, it's about leverage. Communities only reveal what you demand to know. Families who walk in with this guide have an advantage most never will: clarity, control, and confidence. But this is just the start. The next logical step is knowing how to find the right communities, evaluate them with confidence, and use state inspections and Google reviews the way insiders do. Add to that negotiation strategies, exact scripts that flip the leverage back in your favor, and much more. Because when it comes to your family's savings and your loved one's dignity, "good enough" isn't good enough.