

Defining Memory Care Services in Florida Assisted Living Communities

BACKGROUND

Of the 4.5 million adults 65 and older in Florida, over 500,000 have probable Alzheimer's disease (AD),¹ and by 2025, that number is expected to rise to 720,000.² While most people who need care prefer to remain in their own homes, many need residential care. Assisted living communities (ALCs) provide supportive living arrangements for people who need assistance, though not a nursing home level of care. ALCs typically offer a range of services and activities for their residents, including memory care.

Florida is one of the few states with specific regulations for ALCs that want to advertise that they provide memory care services.³ According to the regulation, ALCs advertising memory care services must provide 24-hour security and supervision, implement activities that are specially designed for people with cognitive impairment, and offer training to staff about how to provide care specially tailored for people with AD.⁴ Given these requirements, this policy brief examines the services and activities offered by ALCs that also offer memory care. By comparison, it examines services and activities provided by non-memory care ALCs.

STUDY METHOD

Data was collected from the Florida Agency for Healthcare Administration (AHCA),* which has a legislative mandate to provide information about ALCs and their services. Information about each

ALC's services and activities can be found through the AHCA website, FloridaHealthFinder.gov.

The services used in these analyses were audiology, massage therapy, occupational therapy, pet therapy, physical therapy, speech therapy, water therapy, and other. The activities were arts and crafts, cooking, dancing, exercise, games/cards, gardening, music, shopping, social events/outings, theatre/movie, yoga, and other.

FINDINGS

Only 22% (n= 683) of ALCs in Florida offered memory care services. On average, these ALCs offered 3 services each, ranging from 1 to 9. Occupational therapy was offered most frequently, followed by physical therapy and pet therapy. Less frequently offered were massage therapy, audiology, and water therapy.

ALCs with memory care offered an average of 10 activities each. While some offered only a few activities, more than a third offered 12 different activities. Arts and crafts are offered in all but one ALCs with memory care, and nearly all offered dancing and games/cards. The activities less commonly offered were shopping, gardening, and cooking.

ALCs without memory care services offered much fewer services, averaging less than 1 each and ranging from 0 to 7. The most common services provided were physical therapy and occupational therapy. The least common were audiology and water therapy. The only activity found to be consistently present across all ALCs, regardless of

*Data was collected on February 6, 2020

whether they offered memory care, was arts and crafts.

ALCs with no memory care services provided an average of 7 activities each, ranging from 0 to 12. Besides arts and crafts, the most common activities offered in these ALCs were dancing and games/ cards, while the least common were cooking and shopping (see Table 1).

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The findings from this study indicate that while a relatively small number of Florida ALCs provided memory care, these facilities tend to provide more services and activities to their residents. Nevertheless, the services provided within these facilities were rather limited. It is essential that a variety of services are offered to residents in ALCs, as they offer the opportunity for residents to maintain well-being and functional abilities. Additionally, activities promote enriching and engaging lifestyles for older adults. These are found to reduce boredom and loneliness, while improving quality of life and overall health. Florida regulations specifically address activities within ALCs offering memory care services, but only require that they are specially designed for those with cognitive impairment. From this data, we were unable to establish how these activities were implemented differently between facilities and therefore this warrants further investigation. It is

essential that Florida policy makers begin to incentivize the incorporation of more services and activities within ALCs across Florida.

REFERENCES

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Table 1. Services and Activities Provided to Residents in ALCs With and Without Memory Care Services.

	Number of ALCs without memory care services	Percent of ALCs without memory care services	Number of ALCs with memory care services	Percent of ALCs with memory care services
Services				
Audiology	41	1.7	56	8.2
Massage therapy	78	3.2	112	16.4
Occupational therapy	518	21.5	332	48.6
Other services	58	2.4	20	2.9
Pet therapy	289	12.0	316	46.3
Physical therapy	545	22.6	331	48.5
Speech therapy	360	15.0	300	43.9
Water therapy	40	1.7	48	7.0
Activities				
Arts and crafts	2375	98.7	682	99.9
Cooking	373	15.5	350	51.2
Dancing	1971	81.9	675	98.8
Exercise classes	1462	60.7	639	93.6
Games/ cards	1977	82.1	675	98.8
Gardening	886	36.8	490	71.7
Music	1318	54.8	603	88.3
Other activities	2352	97.7	679	99.4
Shopping	879	36.5	508	74.4
Social events/ outings	1385	57.5	621	90.9
Theater/ movies	1062	44.1	574	84.0
Yoga	1052	43.7	571	83.6

Source: Licensing and Surveying Agency for Healthcare Administration.

Note. ALC= Assisted living community.