

FIVE SIGNS OF A STELLAR
5
ASSISTED LIVING COMMUNITY

Five Signs of a Stellar ASSISTED LIVING COMMUNITY

What Defines a Stellar Community?

A stellar community will always go above and beyond meeting basic needs to provide outstanding care for every individual.

A community is more than a gathering of people—it is a place where every person shares a love for a common purpose and every individual is valued. This is what you want to see in an assisted living community.

A stellar assisted living community goes beyond meeting basic needs of the residents. They provide outstanding care for those residents and value every person in the community. From residents to family members and associates to community partners, *every individual* brings meaning to the community's mission.

This is why it is important for an assisted living community to continuously strive for improvement and evolve to the needs and

voices of all who are served. By working to create a positive experience for *everyone*, an assisted living community can be a vibrant, diverse, dynamic environment—one that is a source of true wellness, purpose, and joy.

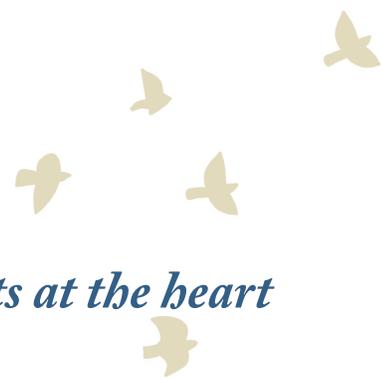
In this resource, we help you identify these dynamic environments by exploring the five signs of a stellar assisted living community:

- 1 Resident-Centered Care**
- 2 Heart & Mind of the Associate**
- 3 Proactive Engagement**
- 4 Change You Can See**
- 5 Transparency & Communication**

Tour Tips

One way to truly experience an assisted living community is through a guided tour. We have provided "Tour Tips" for you to consider as you learn more about how stellar assisted living communities go above and beyond to serve the needs of residents, associates, and families.

Resident-Centered Care



A stellar assisted living community places residents at the heart of every practice.

An assisted living community should be a place where residents *choose* to live and *enjoy* living. It is a place where freedom, well-being, and peace of mind create a sense of feeling at home. To foster this positive environment, a stellar assisted living community places residents at the heart of every practice.

In order to provide the best care for residents, a community needs to not only provide quality amenities and services, but something far more meaningful: **a resident-centered culture**. This holistic culture embraces the unique lifestyles, preferences, and needs of all residents and focuses on the following core areas:

Celebrating the Individual

Every resident is an individual with unique goals, preferences, and needs. A stellar community honors the freedom and dignity of every individual by understanding that residents need to make their own decisions about their daily routines and long-term goals.

Building Relationships

When positive relationships have the ability to thrive, this helps create a true sense of community. Building strong relationships between residents, family members, and associates improves quality of life and helps residents develop a close connection to the community.

Inspiring Confidence

Having a sense of security is fundamental to the peace of mind and well-being of all residents. This not only includes physical safety, but also confidence in knowing that the community is a flexible place where residents are the primary decision-makers when it comes to lifestyle choices.

Leading Through Learning

Stellar community leadership recognizes that there is always room for learning, improvement, and growth. This learning process helps bring all members of the community together to create an environment of teamwork, responsiveness, empowerment, and flexibility.

Tour Tips

Ask a community for examples of how residents are able to make flexible decisions about their daily routines (e.g., flexible dining schedules).

Heart & Mind of the Associate

A stellar community seeks out associates who put their minds, hearts, and efforts into creating positive experiences for residents.

Embracing life in an assisted living community is a gratifying experience when residents know that they can depend on a team of dedicated, skilled associates.

A stellar community seeks out associates who enthusiastically put their minds, hearts, and efforts into creating the best possible experience for every resident each day. These passionate individuals understand that they are part of a greater purpose. They help others find meaning and joy in a new community. It is a purpose far greater than simply showing up for a job, checking off to-do list items, and earning a paycheck.

For this reason, it is critical for a community to provide thorough resources and unwavering support to all associates on an ongoing basis. This effort helps to ensure associates are qualified to provide the best possible care for residents and are emotionally invested in their daily work efforts.

Examples of these resources and support channels can include the following:

- New associate orientation
- Hands-on training sessions
- Team-building exercises
- Diversity and sensitivity training
- Guest lectures
- Attendance at conferences
- Community events
- Professional development resources
- Peer-to-peer mentoring

These opportunities contribute to the professional growth of associates while simultaneously helping the community achieve its mission, vision, and goals.

When associates have fulfillment in contributing to the well-being of those they serve, residents have a more positive outlook, family members have peace of mind, and the community becomes a more vibrant, dynamic environment.

Tour Tips

Ask your tour leader how the community has invested in the professional growth of its associates. Does your tour leader have any personal examples?

Proactive Engagement

A stellar community attains true excellence by advocating that every person's voice is heard.

Everyone has a voice and everyone deserves to have their needs heard. This includes residents, family members, associates, and community partners. Communities that are invested in the well-being and happiness of all individuals create opportunities for all voices to be heard.

It can be frustrating when a resident's holistic wellness needs are not met, an associate's concerns are not addressed, or a community partner's viewpoints are not valued. This can quickly lead to feelings of discontent, a loss of trust, and safety concerns. It sends a message that a "status quo" or "reactive" business model is sufficient for meeting appropriate needs at the appropriate time.

When it comes to the highest standard of service and care, the best communities understand that attaining true excellence can only be achieved by engaging proactively with *every single person* who has a connection to the community.

Engagement is a process that requires actively requesting input and honestly listening to recommendations from all members of the community. **Proactive engagement** requires gathering this input before a health, safety, or wellness concern becomes a larger issue.

It is easy to recognize when proactive engagement is a priority—regular surveys, town hall meetings, and the simple act of listening are all indicators. These methods help to ensure that all voices are heard in the planning process and everyone has an opportunity to provide feedback.

Although proactive engagement requires a commitment that goes beyond the basic requirements for quality service, the results yield continuous improvement by creating a shared future and true sense of community for everyone involved.



Tour Tips

Ask how community leaders get feedback from their residents, family members, and associates and how often. What were the results?

Change You Can See



A stellar community creates positive changes that can be seen and experienced by the entire community.

Meaningful change is not achieved within the lines of written policies—it is brought to life by the stories of those who experience it firsthand.

These stories show the benefits that arise when the effort is made to create positive change for

an entire community. When the result is change that can be *seen* and continuously experienced, it stands testament to a community's commitment to the well-being of every individual who walks through the doors. The following stories show the joy that is created through this commitment.

Each time Judy walked into her bathroom, she would experience a sense of anxiety because of the linoleum floor. The slick surface caused her to feel unsteady and she found herself narrowly avoiding falls when the linoleum was wet—a safety hazard requiring immediate attention.

*Solving this problem would typically require a simple fix of replacing the linoleum with textured tile only in Judy's apartment bathroom. However, **Judy's assisted living community was focused on the greater goal of continuous improvement** and saw this as a call-to-action to ensure that every resident's bathroom received a tile upgrade. Not only was Judy thrilled with the results—every other resident in the community and future residents benefited as well.*

Oscar loved his job as a certified nursing assistant and looked forward to making a difference in the lives of the people he worked with. However, his required workplace training sessions cost hours of time and frustration because the computers at his community had out-of-date operating systems.

Because Oscar's community recognized that the time spent hassling with slow technology translated to more time away from residents, the decision was made to upgrade the operating systems of every computer. This was an undertaking with a high up-front cost, but it paid dividends in the number of hours Oscar could focus on serving his residents. As a result, Oscar was happy and residents benefited from having more time to be cared for by him.

Tour Tips

Ask how recent feedback was implemented across the whole community for all residents. Are the results something you can see during your visit?

Transparency & Communication

A stellar community identifies, acknowledges, and addresses challenges in an upfront and clear way.

When a company is committed to standing for something greater than just business, the word *transparency* is part of the standard vocabulary.

Open communication is one of the most important attributes of an assisted living community. Within this communication culture, it is important that there is not only the *claim* of transparency, but *visible confirmation* that organizational goals, challenges, and achievements are continuously communicated.

Effective and transparent communication can take many forms. Some include posting notices or sending letters and E-mails with important updates and information. Other methods focus on outward communication, such as website content and e-newsletters, which can be distributed quickly and easily to all members of the community as well as the general public.

Stellar communities choose to go above and beyond the standard forms of communication.

Sharing feedback from **community-wide surveys** and holding frequent **resident council meetings** are opportunities to identify, acknowledge, and address the many issues and improvements within the community.

By using these forms of communication, a community shows a deep desire to be transparent about the internal practices, activities, and meaningful moments that represent their commitment to providing the best care for their residents and their lifestyles.

Even when it comes to daily communication within the community, the accessibility of the management team and the presence of well-informed associates greatly impact the happiness and well-being of everyone in the community. When a community continuously strives for improvement and devotes *every* practice to enhancing *every* experience, true joy is achieved and the true meaning of assisted living is discovered.



Tour Tips

How many members of the community's management team did you meet?
Did other associates and residents share their experiences with you?

CARF Accreditation

A stellar community continuously seeks to achieve the “gold standard” through accreditation.

The five signs described in this resource paint a picture of an ideal community. However, it can be overwhelming to determine if and how each of these unique traits are present when you research or visit a particular community.

If the five traits outlined in this resource are important to you, the best way to ensure they are present within a community is to confirm if the community has CARF accreditation.

CARF (The Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities) International is an independent, nonprofit accreditor of health and human services. CARF accreditation is an *entirely voluntary* process available to assisted

living communities nationwide that desire to engage in a meaningful focus on excellence and continuous improvement. While CARF accreditation is voluntary, it is considered a global standard for common practices.

The thorough accreditation process includes approximately 1,500 standards that, when met, exemplify a community’s commitment to putting the needs of every individual at the center of every interaction and business practice. CARF accreditation goes above and beyond state regulations to ensure a reduction of risks, transparency, and the best possible quality of care.



Look for the CARF gold seal during your next site visit to confirm the community you are considering will meet the wants and needs of *everyone* served.

Tour Tips

Ask your tour leader if the community is CARF accredited. This is a great way to determine if the community provides stellar care for every individual.