

CONSUMER ALERT
UNLICENSED ASSISTED LIVING FACILITIES AND PLACEMENT AGENCIES

The Office of Health Care Quality (OHCQ) is issuing this consumer alert so that consumers and their family members or legal representatives are aware of the growing concern this office has about placement agencies offering placements in unlicensed Assisted Living Facilities.

Placement agencies are companies that offer assistance to individuals, families, or health care facilities when there is a need to identify alternatives for individuals who can not return to their home because of their increased care needs or may be homeless. They may function as an intermediary collecting payment from those they have placed or may charge a finders' fee to the facility where an individual is placed. These agencies are not regulated in Maryland. While many placement agencies may be legitimately attempting to provide service to consumers and families, we are aware of situations where placement agencies have falsely told families or facilities that the assisted living facilities or group homes they represent are licensed.

Therefore, the OHCQ encourages consumers to verify the licensure status of any assisted living provider. A list of licensed providers may be accessed on the OHCQ web site (http://dhmh.md.gov/ohcq/licensee_directory/licensee_directory.htm) or by calling either Donna Jones, Administrative Specialist, at (410) 402-8134 or Lavern Johnson, Office Clerk, at (410) 402-8193

In addition, another document that may be helpful to consumers and/or their family members or legal representatives as they are contemplating assisted living placement is the publication entitled, "Assisted Living in Maryland: What You Need to Know", which may be downloaded from the Maryland Department of Aging's web site (<http://www.mdoa.state.md.us/Housing/ALGuide.pdf>).

If consumers or their family members have concerns about the care received at an assisted living facility or group home, they should notify the OHCQ immediately at 1-877-402-8218.

➤ *What is assisted living?* Assisted living is a way to provide care to people who are having difficulty living independently. Assisted living providers furnish a place to live, meals, and assistance with daily activities, such as dressing, bathing, eating, and managing medications. Assisted living facilities also tend to have a less institutional look than nursing homes. However, these facilities are not as highly regulated by the State as nursing homes. There are a wide variety of assisted living providers in Maryland. They range from large, corporate managed facilities where hundreds of people live in their own apartments to small, private homes in which the owners provide services to two residents who share a bedroom.

Any questions regarding assisted living should be directed to either Cheryl Reddick, OHCQ Coordinator, at (410) 402-8184 or Denise Williams, OHCQ Coordinator, at (410) 402-8125.

cc: Ombudsman Program
Adult Protective Services