



ASSISTED LIVING: SOBERING REALITIES

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This book, published simultaneously in the *Journal of Housing for the Elderly*, Vol. 15, Nos. 1/2, 2001, is a monograph with 17 authors in 8 chapters, each addressing a different lesson or caution related to assisted living.

Related to residents, we are alerted that some residents of assisted living are not sure how long they will be able to "age in place", which can be stressful to them; and visits from family and friends are highly valued and should be encouraged by the facility.

Decision-makers in housing and long-term care, will learn that there is no predictable correlation between residents' age and length of residence. Residents' functional decline before and after placement should be studied to determine trajectories. We must recognize different levels and persistence of poverty among subgroups of seniors in making policy-decisions regarding subsidized housing. It may be that only 10-20% of nursing home residents could be appropriately placed in an environment with lower levels of care.

In the chapters of most interest to developers and providers, it is emphasized that for-profit providers tend to be highly bureaucratized, to have policies relating to factors such as incontinence and behaviour management, and are less likely than not-for-profit providers to consult residents about their status. Supportive housing projects that provide the most on-site and off-site support and services, and which are adjacent to community centres, are likely to be the most successful.

In the chapter on design, the most easily readable chapter, we learn that key elements of "homeyness" (supportive protection, human scale, and naturalness) can be incorporated into the architectural design of assisted living residences. The Editor has a PhD in Architecture with an emphasis on Environmental Gerontology.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Intended Audience:

This book is timely, given the move towards Supportive Housing and Assisted Living in Canada, but I found its title more dramatic than its content. Most of the lessons and cautions expounded in the 8 chapters are familiar to specialists in the field. It would have been useful to people who are new to the field and want to get a quick but substantial "fix" on the *Supportive Housing-Assisted Living* trend, to have a fuller introduction, summarizing the content of the chapters, or a discussion chapter at the end of the book, or both. This book is a useful reference for academics and consultants who may be asked to summarize, for clients such as governments and health authorities, some of the hazards in providing Assisted Living. It is also a good source of topics for further research.

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