

# Generalist vs. Specialist: What “Built for Assisted Living” Really Means

Senior living leaders are, by necessity, sophisticated evaluators of clinical vendor quality. The populations served, the regulatory environment, and the operational stakes of getting vendor partnerships wrong all demand discipline that goes well beyond basic service-level expectations.

That discipline is especially important in pharmacy — one of the most operationally consequential vendor relationships in any community. Most long-term care pharmacies serve multiple settings. In many markets, large providers built their operational models first around skilled nursing and later expanded into assisted living. For assisted living and memory care operators, it is worth validating whether a pharmacy partner’s systems, workflow assumptions, and service priorities were built for assisted living — or primarily adapted from a skilled nursing model.

The reason is straightforward: assisted living and skilled nursing are not the same medication management environment. Skilled nursing facilities operate under a detailed federal regulatory framework, often manage higher-acuity short-term regimens, and typically have licensed nursing staff available around the clock. Assisted living communities operate under state regulation — with meaningful variation by state — rely primarily on Medicare Part D for prescription coverage, and often depend on medication aides and med techs to execute daily medication passes.

These differences are not minor. They shape what good pharmacy service looks like day to day: packaging design, med-pass workflow support, eMAR integrations, documentation expectations, and the kind of clinical oversight and reporting senior living leaders need.

## What Pharmacy Specialization Actually Looks Like

A pharmacy partner genuinely specialized in assisted living and memory care looks different from one that serves those settings as one segment among many. The differences typically show up in operational ways:

- Packaging design that optimizes for med-pass speed, clarity, and error reduction for teams staffed primarily by medication aides and med techs.
- eMAR integration depth with platforms commonly used in assisted living — reducing manual reconciliation and documentation burden on community staff.

- Clinical reporting designed around assisted living oversight needs: psychotropic monitoring, polypharmacy risk, and high-risk medication management — not metrics adapted from SNF frameworks.
- Staff engagement and training support built around medication aide realities, including turnover patterns and ongoing competency reinforcement.

## The Portfolio Implication

Community teams usually see misfit first — missed handoffs, workarounds, inconsistent packaging, integration friction. At portfolio scale, those daily issues multiply across sites and create measurable operational and clinical drag. Regional and executive leaders absorb the cumulative cost: time lost to troubleshooting, inconsistency in care delivery, and the ongoing burden of managing a pharmacy relationship that was never optimized for this setting.

## The Questions Worth Asking

Delivery schedules and basic service levels are legitimate starting points — but they do not surface specialization. Questions that do include:

- What percentage of the pharmacy’s client base is assisted living or memory care?
- How does packaging support med-pass speed, clarity, and error reduction for medication aides and med techs?
- What is the pharmacy’s experience integrating with the eMAR platforms most commonly used in assisted living?
- Is clinical support and reporting built around assisted living oversight needs — or primarily adapted from SNF-oriented frameworks?
- How does the pharmacy handle urgent requests, family inquiries, and after-hours needs?

Senior living operators already demand specialization from other vendors. Applying that same rigor to pharmacy selection is not raising the bar — it’s applying the same bar consistently.

## ■ About MMP

MMP is a centralized pharmacy exclusively serving assisted living and memory care communities since 2010. MMP provides standardized pharmacy services designed to support resident safety, clinical reliability, and operational efficiency across multi-community senior living portfolios.

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