

Selecting a nursing home

A checklist to help you find the right facility

Choosing a nursing home for a loved one can be one of the most difficult decisions you make. However, Medicare maintains an easy-to-use Web site tool to help you locate and compare facilities. As you evaluate your candidate list, refer to the following checklist to help narrow your choices to the right facility.

Nursing home: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Contact: _____

Credentials and overall environment

- | | | |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Is the facility certified by Medicare and Medicaid? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Has the facility had stable ownership for some time, with the same administrator and director? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Is a statement of residents' rights clearly posted? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Does the facility have special services if needed in a separate unit? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Is the facility well-lit, clean, safe and welcoming? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

Location and visting

- | | | |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Is the facility convenient to the potential resident's family members and friends? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Are family visits welcomed? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Are children, grandchildren and pets free to visit? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Are family members allowed to take residents out for a day or overnight? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Are there areas where family and friends can visit privately? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Is the facility close to the office of the resident's doctor? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Is public transportation easily accessible? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

Mental and emotional well-being

- | | | |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Are mental health services available? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Are activities planned each day for the residents? (<i>Ask for a calendar of events.</i>) | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |

- Are there activities for residents who can't leave their beds? Yes No
- Is a library with large-print and audio books available for residents? Yes No
- Is there a store for purchasing personal items, such as shaving cream, hair products and snacks? Yes No
- Are residents able to enjoy outdoor areas, such as an enclosed garden? Yes No
- Are plants, pets and other natural elements added to the residents' environment? Yes No
- Are residents taken to special community events and cultural activities? Yes No

Rooms

- Will the resident share a room and/or a bathroom with one or more other residents? Yes No
- If the resident is dissatisfied, can roommates be changed? What is the procedure? _____

- Can the resident bring some of his or her own furniture and decorations? Yes No
- Are nurse and emergency call buttons within easy reach of bed, toilet and bath? Yes No

The resident's care plan

- How often is the care plan reviewed and changed? _____
- What is the protocol for handling problems? _____

- Are there regular fire drills? Yes No
- What bathing facilities are available, and how is bathing handled when the person needs assistance? _____

Nursing home employees

- Are employees screened for drug use, criminal records or other potential problems? Yes No
- What is the turnover rate for skilled employees? _____
- What is the turnover rate for other employees such as meal attendants, financial record keepers, business managers, etc.? _____
- Are registered nurses or licensed practical nurses on duty at all times? Yes No
- Is a trained social worker on staff? Yes No
- What is the ratio of staff to residents during each shift? _____
- Does the staff treat residents with respect and call them by name? Yes No
- Can you talk privately to residents to ask what they think of the facility? Yes No
- Are staff members available to talk if you have a question about a loved one's care? Yes No
- Will your loved one have a consistent team of caregivers? Yes No

Medical care

Is there a physician used by the majority of residents? How often is the doctor on the premises? _____

Does the doctor have a good bedside manner with residents? Yes No

May residents use their personal physician if they choose? Yes No

Are there arrangements with a nearby hospital in the event of a medical emergency? Yes No

What diagnostic treatment facilities are available at the facility? _____

Meals

Are meals served in a communal dining room or is each resident brought meals to his or her room? Yes No

If communal, can residents choose with whom they dine? Yes No

Can you stay for a meal? (*This will help you gauge the quality of the food service.*) Yes No

How does the food taste, and how is it presented to the resident? _____

Admission requirements

What financial information will the facility require during the admissions process? _____

How long does the admissions process take? _____

Can the resident or his representative have copies in advance of all admissions documents and contracts for review? Yes No

Cost of care

What is included in the cost of care? How are extra items billed? _____

Can laundry be taken off premises? Does this save the resident some costs? Yes No

How are prescription drugs handled? _____

What is the cost difference between a private room and a semiprivate room? \$ _____

Transportation services

If required non-emergency medical services are not available on premises (such as dialysis), how is transportation arranged?

What about transportation to other places, such as local stores and religious services? _____

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