



Considerations for Selecting a Facility

Multiple factors come into play when evaluating nursing facilities. Remember, each resident — young, elderly, ambulatory, non-ambulatory or with a disability — has different needs, preferences and desires that should be taken into account in the selection of a facility.

Nursing facilities are designed to be communities where residents can feel comfortable, build relationships, and recover or receive the ongoing care they need. By planning ahead, you can ensure that your loved one will be provided with the highest quality of care and quality of life.

Consider what you want - What is important to you? Nursing care, meals, physical therapy, a religious connection, hospice care, or special care units for dementia patients? Do you want a place close to family and friends so they can easily visit?

Talk to friends and family - Talk with friends, relatives, social workers, and religious groups to find out what places they suggest. Check with healthcare providers about which nursing homes they feel provide good care.

Medical – Are other medical professionals (dentists, podiatrists, optometrists) available, and are therapy programs (physical, occupational, speech pathology) available? Does the facility have an arrangement with a nearby hospital, and will a bed be available after hospitalization? How are prescription drugs ordered?

Costs – What services are covered in the basic charge? Request a list of specific services not covered in the basic rate. Does the facility accept Medicaid and/or Medicare, if that coverage is needed?

Service Offerings – What special services are available? Does the facility provide services for terminally ill residents and their families? Does it offer special programs or housing for those with Alzheimer's or other forms of dementia?

Resident Rights/Autonomy – What are the resident's rights and responsibilities? When are restraining devices recommended, and why? Does the facility have a Resident Council, and a Family Council in which you can participate?

Licensure and Certification – Is the facility certified to provide Medicare and/or Medicaid coverage if it is needed by the resident? Are survey inspection reports available for review? Does the facility have a formal quality assurance program?

Plan a visit – Make plans to visit facilities and meet with staff to tour and ask questions.

- **Ambience** – Is the building clean, well-lighted, welcoming and attractive?
- **Staff** – Do caregivers show respect and a positive attitude toward residents and others? Is the administrator available to answer questions, discuss problems or hear complaints?
- **Activities** – Do activities planned for the week or month suit the needs and interests of your loved one? Are residents encouraged to participate? Are religious services held on the premises or when individualized arrangement can be made for residents to worship?
- **Rooms** – Ask to visit a typical room. Does the living space suit the needs of the resident? How are roommates selected? How are private items stored or secured? What is the policy for residents having a private telephone, television and personal decorations? Is there a nurse call bell by each bed? Is there fresh drinking water by each bed?
- **Dining** – Observe mealtime at the facility and see how the menu is managed. Ask to have the dining procedures explained to you. How are special dining or menu requests handled, and what arrangements will be made if residents are unable to eat in the dining room? Are snacks provided?

Five Star Rating System – You are likely to come across five-star quality ratings while doing research to find the best skilled nursing center or rehabilitation care option for you or your family. The federal government uses the [Nursing Home Compare tool](#), which is more commonly reported on by the media. Five-star ratings are determined by the [Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services](#) (CMS) and can help you compare nursing facilities in your search for safe and high-quality long term care.