



HOW TO SELECT A NURSING HOME

A Helpful Checklist for Families

Some of the items on this list will be discussed in an initial telephone call; some will be discussed during a visit. Keep a copy of this checklist with you during all of your conversations with the nursing homes so you can record information while it is still fresh in your mind.

Nursing Home Name _____

Staff Contact _____ Phone Number _____

Physical Plant

- ___ Grounds are well tended and entrance presents a favorable impression
- ___ Ramps outside allow easy access
- ___ Home shows noticeable attempts to make environment more "homelike" and less institutional
- ___ Home appears clean and well run
- ___ Home is free of unpleasant odors
- ___ Rooms are well ventilated and temperature is comfortable
- ___ Hallways are well lit and wide enough for two wheelchairs to pass easily
- ___ Lounge areas for TV watching, cards, conversation, etc., are available on each floor or wing and are being used by residents
- ___ Outdoor area is accessible to residents
- ___ The building is smoke-free; smoking area is available for residents if requested



Safety

- ___ Home seems free of obstacles and hazards
- ___ Grab bars and hand rails are installed
- ___ Smoke detectors, sprinkler systems, emergency lighting are installed
- ___ Fire extinguishers, fire doors are appropriately placed
- ___ Directions for emergency evacuation are prominently displayed
- ___ Exits are clearly marked and unobstructed
- ___ Secure areas are available for residents who wander
- ___ There is a secure Alzheimer's special care unit or wing

Resident Rooms

- ___ Nurses stations or substations are reasonably near most rooms
- ___ Rooms have no more than 4 beds that are adequately spaced
- ___ Rooms are large enough for all roommates to have walkers and/or wheelchairs
- ___ Home has plan for matching roommates
- ___ Residents have minimum of a bed, chair, reading light, closet, dresser, and bedside table
- ___ Closet and drawer space are adequate
- ___ Call buttons are easily accessible
- ___ Curtain or screen is available for privacy in multiple-bed room
- ___ If toilet facilities are shared, with how many others
- ___ Residents are allowed to decorate or personalize the room
- ___ Resident doors have nameplates
- ___ Residents are allowed a phone



- ___ Resident has easy access to public phone and privacy for use
- ___ Tour guide offers to show room on wing or floor where resident would live
- ___ Tour guide introduces potential roommate(s), if possible

Bath and Shower Rooms

(Sometimes located away from resident rooms-ask to see!)

- ___ Facilities are conveniently located
- ___ Facilities are shared by how many residents
- ___ Safety features (grab bars and call bells) are installed and working
- ___ Temperature meets state code

Medical Services

- ___ Resident's personal physician is welcome
- ___ A staff physician is available to care for resident
- ___ Physician is on call 24 hours for medical emergencies
- ___ Name and number of emergency physician are available to family
- ___ Home has arrangements with nearby hospital for emergency transfers
- ___ Family is notified prior to relocation
- ___ Home offers dental care, eye care, and foot care (either as part of basic charge or at additional charge)

Nursing Services

- ___ At least one RN or LPN is on duty each shift
- ___ At least one RN is on duty during the day, seven days a week
- ___ Director of nursing is an RN
- ___ Nurses (RN and LPN) and nursing assistants regularly receive in-service education



- ___ Home is restraint free (preferred) or residents in restraints are regularly monitored
- ___ Nurses' station is organized and staffed (Note: With the move to a homelike environment, many homes many not have a traditional, institutional-looking nurses' station.)

Rehabilitation and Therapy Services

- ___ Therapists are either on staff or available through a contracted service
- ___ Therapies offered include:
 - ___ Physical
 - ___ Speech
 - ___ Occupational
 - ___ Recreational
 - ___ Psychiatry
- ___ Therapies are included in basic rate or how are they billed

Social Services and Recreational Therapy

- ___ Trained social workers are on staff
- ___ Trained activities coordinator is on staff
- ___ Activity calendar is prominently displayed and residents are participating in activities
- ___ Activities are realistic and varied to suit small or large groups and individual tastes and abilities
- ___ Activities include outings away from the home for those who can participate
- ___ Activities are provided to those confined to rooms or otherwise inactive
- ___ Activities include events for evenings and weekends
- ___ A variety of activities are offered throughout the day
- ___ Home recognizes and respects individual religious preferences
- ___ A space is designated and available for worship
- ___ Home has volunteer program



Food Service

- ___ Dietician is on staff
- ___ Kitchen staff is appropriately dressed; wearing hairnets while in the kitchen
- ___ Kitchen is clean and organized
- ___ Waste is properly disposed of
- ___ Meal schedule is displayed for residents
- ___ Three meals are offered seven days a week
- ___ Enough time is allowed for meals
- ___ Nutritious snacks are available
- ___ Food looks sufficient and appetizing
- ___ Food is tasty
- ___ Alternates are offered if resident does not want particular food
- ___ Special diets are observed
- ___ Dining room is attractive and comfortable
- ___ Atmosphere is pleasant and unhurried; service is courteous
- ___ Residents who need help eating are assisted by staff at no extra charge

Additional Services

- ___ Personal laundry service is available
- ___ Laundry room is clean and organized
- ___ Beauty/barber shop is available
- ___ Snack bar is available
- ___ Banking services are available



Costs

- Home is within your price range
- Monthly charges compare favorably with other homes
- Itemized list of basic services is offered in writing
- List of items not covered under monthly charge is provided
- Additional charges are competitive with other homes
- Refund is made for unused days paid in advance

(Costs, continued)

- Admission contract is presented for consideration
- Home has clear procedures for internal transfers, transfers to hospital or discharges from home
- Itemized bill is provided each month
- Deposit is required
- Payment plan is available
- Clear procedures are outlined for change in payment source (i.e., private pay to Medicaid)
- Home encourages family to have attorney review contract and be present at signing

Residents

- Residents are up, dressed, active
- Residents appear clean, well groomed
- Residents know each other, talk, visit
- Residents have individual choices such as bedtime, freedom to move about the home, freedom to move if they have problems with a roommate
- Residents have an active voice in the home and participate in resident-run



committees

- Residents hold Resident Council meetings
- Residents receive bath/shower how often
- Isolation rooms and baths for residents with contagious diseases are available

Family/Friends

- Visitors are encouraged
- Visiting hours are convenient for residents and visitors
- Private room for family visits is available

Families are offered services such as:

- Counseling
- Care plan updates
- Support group
- Family council

Administration

- Administration is available, courteous and shares information freely
- Administrator knows residents and staff by name
- Administrator is at the home most of every day

Staff

- Staff members are attending to residents, not gathered at nurses station
- Staff ratio is reasonable for size of home
- Staff members interact well with residents, one another, and administrative

staff

- ___ Staff members respect privacy and dignity (knock on room door before entering, wait to be invited in, close curtain before giving care, sit at resident's level while feeding, etc.)
- ___ Staff members respond to calls for help in reasonable time



Questions to Ask in Meeting with Administrative Personnel

Discuss the following issues with the administrator, if possible, or address them to the person leading the tour:

- Who owns the home? Is it a local group? If not, where are the headquarters? How many homes do they own? What is the history of the home? How long has it been in business under the present owners? How has it grown? What is its present size (number of beds)? What is the level of training for the administrative staff? Administrator, director of nursing, director of social services? How long have these key people been in their positions? Is the home accredited?
- What is the daily or monthly rate? What does this specifically include? Can I have that in writing? What are the individual charges for other services? Can I have that in writing? Does the home accept Medicare?
- What procedures will the home follow if:
 - I or my loved ones have a complaint or concern
 - There is a medical emergency involving my relative
 - There is a change in the level of care needed by my relative
 - There is a change in payment source for my relative's care
 - There is a conflict between my relative and his or her roommate
 - There is a need for hospitalization beyond the normal period during which a room would be held for my relative
- What is the staff turnover rate? Does the home "float" staff persons throughout the facility or leave the same people on the same wings and shifts? (Neither is necessarily good or bad by itself, but if your relative really needs stability, as in the case of a person with Alzheimer's disease, you may wish to give preference to the staff that does not float.)
- What is the home's policy regarding responsibility for the disappearance of resident property?
- What is the home's policy regarding the management of a resident's personal funds?
- How does the home assign a room and roommate?
- Can I have a copy of the home's admissions agreement or contract to study at home?



Before You Leave

Ask for copies of:

- Menus for the month
- Activity schedule for the month
- Names and titles of key staff persons
- Name of staff physician or medical director
- List of resident rights
- List of basic and extra charges
- Admissions agreement or contract

If you haven't already been introduced, ask to meet

- Administrator
- Director of nursing
- Director of activities programming
- Medical director*
- Social worker*
- Dietician*
- Therapist*

*Some of these people may not be permanently on staff or may not be essential for you to meet at this time.

Selecting a nursing home can be a daunting task. Consider bringing another person with you when you tour facilities – a second set of eyes and ears will add another perspective. If you are not available to tour facilities for a loved one, consider retaining a geriatric care manager. With the benefit of information about your loved one you provide, a geriatric care manager, familiar with facilities in the area, can facilitate the selection process for you. CJE's Geriatric Care Managers can be reached at 773.508.1000