

# How to Choose a Nursing Home

By Littman Krooks LLP | 05/01/07

Few things are more stressful than finding a nursing home for a loved one. Everyone has heard nursing home horror stories and no one wants that to happen to their loved ones. While there is no way to guarantee that nothing will go wrong, some careful research and planning can help reassure you. Following are some criteria to consider when looking for a nursing home.

- **Location.** No single factor is more important to quality of care and quality of life of a nursing home resident than visits by family members. Care is often better if the facility knows someone's watching and cares. Visits can be the high point of the day or week for the nursing home resident. So, make it as easy as possible for family members and friends to visit.
- **Special Needs.** Make sure the facility can meet any special needs the resident may have, including a ventilator, psychiatric care, or extra supervision. If the resident has dementia, the facility will need to be one that handles dementia patients. Make sure the staff is properly trained for dementia patients; there is enough staff, especially at night; and staff members are assigned to a particular resident.
- **Personal Needs.** Can the facility meet personal needs, such as religious or ethnic needs? Also, if the resident speaks a language other than English, are there staff who speak the same language?
- **References.** Ask the facility to provide the names of family members of residents so you can ask them about the care provided in the facility and the staff's responsiveness when the resident or relatives raise concerns.
- **Do research.** [CareScout](#) is an unbiased source for ratings and reviews of eldercare providers nationwide. Detailed, 7-10 page Nursing Home reports are available for a fee, and include more than 100 pieces of information on quality, resident population profiles, and health violations. [Medicare.gov](#) allows you to get three years worth of inspection reports on the nursing homes you are considering. Find out who owns the facility and if they own any other nursing homes, and see if you can get reports for those nursing homes as well. In addition, talk to the long-term care ombudsman in your state to find out if there have been complaints against the nursing homes you are considering. (To locate the ombudsman in your state, [click here](#).)
- **Interview the administration and staff.** Talk to the nursing home administrator or nursing staff about how care plans are developed for residents and how they respond to concerns expressed by family members. Make sure you are comfortable with the response. It is better that you meet with and ask questions of the people responsible for care and not just the person marketing the facility. For a checklist of questions to ask when interviewing the staff, [click here](#).
- **Tour the nursing home.** Try not to be impressed by a fancy lobby or depressed by an older, more rundown facility. What matters most is the quality of care and the interactions between staff and residents. See what you pick up about how the staff interacts with the patients, how well residents are attended to and whether they are treated with respect. Also, investigate the quality of the food service. Eating is both a necessity and a pleasure that continues even when we're unable to enjoy much

else.

For more on nursing homes, [click here](#).

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