

A Guide to Selecting a Nursing Facility

The following checklist is intended as a convenient reference for use when visiting several facilities. Remember, the most important consideration in any choice is the individual's specific situation. The elderly resident often has different needs than the young resident. The ambulatory resident has different needs than does the bedridden. While the emphasis you place on any question is up to you, keep in mind that you can't change the resident to fit the facility. You must select the facility that meets the needs of the resident.

Licensure

- Does the facility have a current license from Pennsylvania?
- Does the Administrator have a current license from Pennsylvania?

If the answer to either of these questions is "no," do not use the home.

Certification and Quality Review

- If Medicare and/or Medicaid coverage is needed, is the facility certified to provide it?
- Does the facility have a formal quality assurance program?

Location

- Is the facility pleasing to the resident?
- Is the facility convenient for the resident's personal physician?
- Is the facility convenient for frequent visits of family and friends?
- Is the facility near a cooperating hospital?
- Is the facility near a hospital where your personal physician practices?

Accident Prevention

- Is the facility well lighted inside?
- Is the facility free of hazards underfoot?
- Are chairs sturdy and not easily tipped?
- Are warning signs posted on freshly waxed floors?
- Are handrails in hallways and grab bars in bathrooms?

Fire Safety

- Does the facility meet federal and/or Pennsylvania codes?
- Are exits clearly marked and unobstructed?
- Are written emergency evacuation plans posted with floor plans throughout the facility?

- Are fire drills periodically conducted?
- Are exit doors unlocked on the inside?
- Are doors to stairways kept closed?

Bedrooms

- Do bedrooms open onto the halls?
- Does each resident room have a window?
- Are rooms limited to four beds?
- Is there a privacy drapery for each bed?
- Is there a nurse call bell by each bed?
- Is there fresh drinking water by each bed?
- Is there at least one comfortable chair per resident?
- Is there a clothes closet or separate set of drawers for each resident?
- Is there room for a wheelchair to maneuver?
- Is care used in selecting roommates?
- Is there easy access to each bed?

Cleanliness

- Is the facility as clean as you set your personal standards?
- Is the facility free of unpleasant odors?

Lobby

- Is the atmosphere welcoming?
- Is the furniture attractive and comfortable?
- Is there a bulletin board with an activities schedule?
- Are certificates and licenses on display?

Hallways

- Are halls large enough for two wheelchairs to pass easily?
- Do halls have hand grip railings?
- Are halls well lighted?

Dining Room

- Is the dining area attractive and inviting?
- Are tables convenient for those in wheelchairs?
- Is food tasty and attractively served?
- Is time adequate to eat meals?
- Do meals match posted menu?
- Are those needing help receiving it?

Kitchen

- Is the food preparation area separate from the dish washing and garbage areas?
- Is food needing refrigeration not standing on counters?
- Does kitchen help observe sanitation rules?

Activity Rooms

- Are rooms available for resident activities?
- Is equipment (such as games, easels, yarn, kiln, etc.) available?
- Are residents using equipment?

Special Purpose Rooms

- Are rooms set aside for physical examinations or therapy?
- Are rooms available for private visits with family and friends?

Isolation Room

- Does the facility have at least one bed and bathroom for residents with contagious illness?

Toilet Facilities

- Are toilets convenient to bedrooms?
- Are they easy for a wheelchair resident to use?
- Is there a sink in each bathroom?
- Are nurse call bells near each toilet?
- Are hand grips on or near toilets?
- Do bathtubs and showers have non-slip surface and handgrips?

Grounds

- Is there easy access for the handicapped?
- Is outdoor furniture available for residents and visitors?
- Are hazardous objects in resident walkways?

Medical

- Is a physician available in an emergency?
- Are personal physicians allowed?
- Is regular medical attention assured?
- Are medical records and plans of care kept?
- Are residents involved in plans for treatment?
- Is confidentiality of medical records assured?
- Are other medical services (dentists, podiatrists, optometrists) available?
- Will the resident's personal physician be notified in an emergency?
- Does the facility report periodically to the resident's personal physician?

Care Planning

- Does the facility provide services for terminally ill residents and their families?
- Does the facility have an Alzheimer's disease program?
- Does the facility care for mentally ill residents?

Hospitalization

- Does the facility have an arrangement with a nearby hospital?
- Is emergency transportation readily available?

Nursing Services

- Is a registered nurse responsible for nursing staff in a SNF (Skilled Nursing Facility)?
- Are licensed nurses on duty around the clock in a SNF?
- Are trained nurse aides and orderlies on duty in homes providing nursing care?

Pharmacy

- Are routine and emergency drugs available?
- Does a pharmacist review resident drug regimens in a SNF?
- Is a pharmacist available for staff and resident consultation?

Religious Observances

- Are arrangements made for residents to worship as they please?

Therapy Program

- Is there a physical therapy program available under the direction of a qualified physical therapist?
- Is therapy available to meet special needs?
- Are services of an occupational therapist or speech pathologist available?

Activities Program

- Are resident preferences observed?
- Are group and individual activities available?
- Are residents encouraged to participate?
- Are outside trips planned?
- Do volunteers work with residents?

Social Services

- Is a social worker available to assist residents and families?

Food

- Does a dietician plan menus for residents on special diets?
- Are personal likes and dislikes taken into consideration?
- Does the menu vary from meal to meal?
- Is plenty of time allowed for each meal?
- Are snacks available?
- Is food delivered to residents unable or unwilling to eat in the dining room?
- Are warm foods served warm?
- Does staff assist residents who need help with eating?

Grooming

- Is assistance in bathing and grooming available?
- Are barbers and beauticians available?

Staff Attitudes

- Does staff show interest in and affection for individual residents?

- Is staff courteous?
- Is the administrator available to answer questions, hear complaints, or discuss problems?
- Does staff respond quickly to resident calls for assistance?
- Does staff know residents by name?

Resident Rights

- Does the facility have a written description of resident rights and responsibilities?
- Is staff trained to protect resident dignity and privacy?
- Does the facility have a resident council?

Costs

- Are all services covered in the basic daily charge?
- If not, is a list of specific services not covered in the basic rate available? (Some facilities have schedules covering linen, personal laundry, haircuts, shampoos, pedicures, dental care, etc.)
- Are advance payments returned if the resident leaves the facility?

Your Part

If you are selecting a nursing facility for someone else are you:

- Involving this person in the choice?
- Prepared to ease the resident's transition to the nursing facility by being with him on admission day and staying a few hours to get him settled in?
- Ready to visit the resident frequently and to make sure that his friends make similar visits?
- Willing to provide the resident with the same amount of love in the nursing home as you would if he were at home?