
Safe Nursing Home Selection Checklist

The decision to move yourself or a loved one into a nursing home isn't easy to make. It's important to thoroughly evaluate every potential home to ensure abuse or neglect will not occur. Use this helpful checklist in your search for the right fit:

- Talk with other residents at the nursing home that you are considering.**
Walk around the corridors of the facility. Speak with residents who are bedridden. Your own physical observations could be as important as the statements of the residents. Do the residents appear well groomed? Are there visible wounds or sores on the residents? How is their dental care? If you talk to multiple residents who appear confused and disoriented, you may be witnessing signs of neglect.
- Look at the latest state survey.**
Federal regulations require that all nursing homes have the latest state survey of the facility readily available for review at the facility. It is wise to scrutinize this report and question its contents. Be on the lookout for signs of lapses in basic care.
- Ask about the size of the staff at the facility.**
What is the size of the staff during the different hours of the day and night? How many staff members are nurses? How many are nursing assistants? Are there social workers and clergy on staff? Determine how the staffing information for the facility under consideration compares to other nursing homes with a similar number of patients.
- Speak with the relatives of other residents at the facility.**
Have they observed any problems? Do they have any issues with the management or staff at the facility? You may wish to determine whether any of the residents' families use web cameras. Although this "cyber visitation" practice is just beginning to spread, some families who are unable to visit daily will place internet cameras in a relative's room to allow them unlimited access to what is occurring at any time.
- When walking the halls of the facility, use your own senses.**
One of the most telling methods of evaluating a facility may be your sense of smell. The nursing home should not smell of urine or feces. If it does, residents may not be receiving adequate toileting, which often helps in preventing life-threatening illnesses like urinary tract infections or bedsores (also known as decubitus ulcers or pressure ulcers).
- Watch residents as they are being fed.**
Are the residents consistently underweight in appearance? How much of the food is being eaten? Are residents who need assistance with eating receiving the help they need? Do the aides who assist with the food seem overwhelmed? Are the aides spending enough time working with each resident during mealtime?
- Visit the potential nursing home on more than one occasion.**
Plan your visits to view the facility at different times of the day and week. If you can only visit the nursing home once, go on a weekend afternoon or at night. In general, staff levels are lowest during these "off" times.
- Look at a normal room.**
When you attempt to look at the facility, are you deliberately steered to certain rooms or residents? If you feel you are being denied full access to the facility, there may be issues of concern.
- Ask to meet all of the key executive personnel at the facility.**
Speak with the administrative head, the medical staff administrator, and the nursing staff administrator. Inquire about the frequency of resident examinations by physicians, and about the turnover rate of the facility's employees.

Choosing a nursing home for you or a loved one is a big decision. Please visit our website for more information at www.CallSam.com.