

Nursing home checklist



Choosing a nursing home for a family member can be one of the most difficult decisions you make. The Registry of U.S. Nursing Homes (memberofthefamily.net/usregistry.htm) lists 16,000 homes alphabetically by state, with results of the past three government surveys for each home. Once you've narrowed down your candidate list, make several copies of the following checklist and fill in one for each nursing home you are considering.

NURSING HOME: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Contact: _____

CREDENTIALS AND OVERALL ENVIRONMENT

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| Is the facility certified by Medicare and Medicaid? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| How long has the facility been certified? | |
| Has the facility had stable ownership for some time, with the same administrator and director? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Is a statement of residents' rights clearly posted? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Does the facility have an Alzheimer's unit or other special-care area restricted to residents with special-care needs? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Is this specialty unit separated from other areas of the facility? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Is the facility well lit, clean, safe, and welcoming? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |

LOCATION AND VISITING

Frequent visits generally will improve the resident's mental and emotional well-being and ensure that quality-of-care issues can be addressed as they arise.

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|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| Is the facility convenient to the resident's family members and friends? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| What are the visiting hours? | |
| Are family visits welcomed? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Are there restrictions on visits by children? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Are family members allowed to take residents out for a day or overnight? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Are there areas where family and friends can visit privately? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Is the facility close to the office of the resident's doctor? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Is the facility convenient to public transportation? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |

MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

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|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| Are mental health services available? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Are activities planned each day for the residents? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Are events regularly scheduled? (Ask to look at the schedule.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Are there activities for residents who can't leave their beds? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Is there a library available for residents, with large-print and audio books? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Is there a small store for purchasing personal items, such as shaving cream, hair care products, and snacks? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Are residents able to enjoy outdoor areas, such as an enclosed garden? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Are plants, pets, and other natural elements added to the residents' environment? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Are residents taken to special community events and cultural activities? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |

ROOMS

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|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| Will the resident share a room and/or a bathroom with one or more other residents? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| How are roommates and rooms selected? | |
| If the resident is dissatisfied, can roommates be changed? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| How is this accomplished? | |
| Can the resident bring some of his or her own furniture and decorations? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Is drinking water readily available? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Are nurse and emergency call buttons within easy reach of bed, toilet, and bath? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |

THE RESIDENT'S CARE PLAN

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| <i>Individual care plans must be implemented for each resident.</i> | |
| How often is the care plan reviewed and changed? | |
| What is the protocol for handling problems? | |
| Are there regular fire drills? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| What bathing facilities are available, and how is bathing handled when the person needs assistance? | |

NURSING HOME EMPLOYEES

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|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| How are employees selected? | |
| Are employees screened for drug use, criminal records, or other potential problems? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| What is the turnover rate for skilled employees? | |
| What is the turnover rate for employees who perform ancillary services, such as meal preparation and financial recordkeeping? | |
| Are registered nurses or licensed practical nurses on duty at all times? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Is a trained social worker on staff? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| What is the ratio of staff to residents during each shift? (Ideally, a facility will have one nurse's aide for every five or six residents between 7 a.m. and 11 p.m.) | |
| Does the staff treat residents with respect? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Can you talk privately to residents to ask what they think of the facility? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Are staff members available to talk if you have a question about a loved one's care? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |

MEDICAL CARE

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|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| Is there a physician used by the majority of residents? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| What are his/her qualifications? | |
| How often is the doctor on the premises? | |
| Does the doctor have a good bedside manner with residents? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| May residents use their personal physician if they choose? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Are there arrangements with a nearby hospital in the event of a medical emergency? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| What diagnostic treatment facilities are available at the facility? | |

MEALS

Eating is both a necessity and a pleasure that continues even when we're unable to enjoy much else.

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| Are meals served in a communal dining room or is each resident brought meals in his or her room? | |
| If communal, how are tables assigned in the dining room? | |
| How does the food taste, and how is it presented to the resident? | |
| Is there a way to heat food that has become cold? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Can you stay for a meal? (This will help you gauge the quality of the food service.) | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

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|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| What financial information will the facility require during the admissions process? | |
| Can the resident or his representative have copies in advance of all admissions documents and contracts for review? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| How long does the admissions process take? | |

COST OF CARE

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|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| What is included in the cost of care? | |
| How are extra items billed? | |
| Can laundry be taken off premises? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Does this save the resident some costs? | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| How are prescription drugs handled? | |
| What is the cost difference between a private room and a semiprivate room? | |

TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

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| If required non-emergency medical services are not available on premises (such as dialysis), how is transportation arranged? | |
| What about transportation to other places, such as local stores and religious services? | |

RESOURCES

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|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| CareScout | carescout.com | <i>An unbiased source for ratings and reviews of eldercare providers nationwide. Detailed, 7-to10-page nursing home reports are available for a small fee and include information on quality, resident population profiles, and health violations.</i> |
| Elder Law Answers | elderlawanswers.com | <i>Offers tips on choosing a facility, talking with family about placement, residents' rights, and resolving disputes. Also lists qualified elder law attorneys nationwide.</i> |
| Nursing Home INFO | nursinghomeinfo.com | <i>Offers a facility search function, a needs assessment survey to help you determine the type of facility you should be looking for, and an explanation of what a nursing home is and what types of services are provided.</i> |
| Silin, Peter S., <i>Nursing Homes: The Family's Journey</i> . (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001) | | |
| Burger, Sarah, Editor, <i>Nursing Homes: Getting Good Care There</i> . (Impact Publishers, 2001) | | |
| Rantz, Marilyn, et al. <i>The New Nursing Homes: A 20-Minute Way to Find Great Long-Term Care</i> . (Fairview Press, 2001) | | |
| Charlap, Steven S., M.D., <i>Making Sense of Nursing Homes: A Guide for Families</i> . (Age Sense, 2002) | | |

Contact your financial advisor for more information.

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