



The Basics:

- ✿ Where is the nursing home located? Is it close enough for family and friends to visit regularly? Is it close enough to your parent's doctors to make it easy to get to appointments?
- ✿ Make sure the home is certified by both Medicare and Medicaid. This will ensure certain quality standards, and make your parent eligible for short- and long- term payment assistance.
- ✿ Check the latest state inspection, which should be posted when you enter the home.
- ✿ Are the facility's licensing and certifications current?
- ✿ Make sure to get a complete pricing list. You don't want any surprises. Find out the basic rates and specifically what's included and what's not.
- ✿ Ask about the security and safety measures that are in place at the home.
- ✿ Does the home appear to be clean and in good condition?
- ✿ Do the rooms look comfortable and clean?
- ✿ Does it pass the smell test?



Quality of Staff:

- ✿ Watch how the staff interacts with the residents and how the residents respond. Do the staff members appear to be caring, respectful and engaged? Do they seem friendly and competent? Do the residents have an easy relationship with the staff?
- ✿ What is the nurse-to-resident ratio? How about the ratio of nurses' aides to residents?
- ✿ Do they run background and reference checks on their employees? What kind of training do they provide? Is the training ongoing and regularly updated? How long does the average employee stay there?
- ✿ Who is the staff doctor? How often does the doctor visit? Can your parent see his or her own doctor? What hospital would your parent be sent to in case of emergency?
- ✿ How often would your parent receive physical therapy? Do they offer occupational therapy? Do they offer speech therapy? Walk around the therapy room(s) and watch the therapists interact with the residents. Do they seem professional and knowledgeable? Do the residents seem generally engaged and involved?
- ✿ Try to gauge the staff's knowledge about your parent's specific illness.
- ✿ Would your parent have the same staff each day?
- ✿ Do the people working in the business office seem knowledgeable and competent? Are they also willing to assist with the difficult paperwork?



Quality of Life:

- ✿ Are most of the residents up and dressed? Are they clean and properly groomed? Does it appear that most are well taken care of?
- ✿ Is there space within the facility for your parent to enjoy a different atmosphere? Like, for example, an ice cream parlor, a courtyard fountain, or a library?
- ✿ Ask to see at least a week of menus. Do the residents have meal choices? Try to be there for a meal so you can check out the food. Does it look appetizing? Does it smell good? See if you can try out the food for yourself. Try to poke your head into the kitchen. Does it seem clean and well-organized?
- ✿ What kinds of activities are available? Look at the schedule. If there's an activity going on while you're visiting, check it out.
- ✿ What is the visitation policy?
- ✿ Is your parent allowed to have a phone? A private television? What are the restrictions, if any, and what are the associated costs?
- ✿ Ask for a copy of the Rules and Regulations that residents must comply with, as well as a copy of the Residents Rights.
- ✿ Is there a resident and/or family council? If so, how does that work?
- ✿ Does the home have a barber/beauty shop on the premises?

Consider what's essential to you and your parent, and add those items to this list before you start your visits.

If you have time, select the two or three homes that you like the best and visit them again. Try to pick a different day and time. The second visit is less emotional and will help you make a better selection. The second visit is also a good time to meet with the head administrator and/or the director of nursing. A talented and compassionate leader is important, and you should have a good feeling about the people in this job.