



Compassionate & Expert Care for Frail Seniors
in the Warmth & Comfort of Real Homes ~ Since 1990.

How to Find the Best Care Facility

Touring a care home, nursing home, or any other care setting is the most important part of your research and decision process. Be keen in your observations and trust your instincts.

One very important factor is your overall feeling about the provider or administrator; his background, experience, and motivation for doing this work. You'll have to work and communicate with him/her regularly, possibly for years so it's important that you feel comfortable. If communication is difficult even a small problem could become challenging to solve.

Additionally, one of the most important aspect affecting your final decision might be the facility's limitations in the level of care they are able—or willing—to provide. Moving is time consuming, expensive, and can be very stressful for everyone involved.

Here is a series of questions to choose from and items to note during your visit to any potential facility. I suggest familiarizing yourself with these questions and pick the most relevant to your specific needs. You may even want to highlight some items to remember during your visit.

Surroundings

1. As you arrive, do you like the location and external appearance?
2. Is there an outside area to sit, walk, or garden?
3. Is the facility close to friends and relatives?
4. Is the facility on a noisy or busy street?
5. For dementia & wonderers: is the exit door alarmed? On a busy, dangerous street?
6. Are there shops, a library, a park, or other amenities within walking distance? Is the facility on a bus line or near amenities and activities you enjoy?

Physical Setting

1. Is the floor plan easy to follow?
2. Are doorways, hallways, and rooms accommodating to wheelchairs and walkers?
3. Note **Mobility** Devices
 - a. Hand rails to help with walking and bathrooms
 - b. Raised toilet seats, sit-down shower bench, grab bars, floor-to-ceiling poles.
4. **Lighting** – is there good natural and artificial lighting?
5. Is there a chair, reading lamp, and an overhead light?
6. **Cleanliness**: is the facility clean, free of odors, and well heated (or cooled)? Does it meet your standards of cleanliness?
7. **Hazards**: note excessive furnishings and tight spaces, encumbrances in halls/rooms. Any obvious hazards?
8. Will you have free use of the kitchen? Activity rooms? Dining room? Grounds?
9. Ask about smoking policy.
10. **Furnishings**: What furniture is provided? Can you bring your own?



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Staff

1. **Interact with the caregivers** on duty – note their communication skills.
 - a. Do they act in a professional manner?
 - b. Are they suitably dressed, personable, and outgoing?
 - c. Do they appear to treat residents with respect and dignity? Provide privacy?
2. **The Staff:**
 - a. Who will provide the needed personal care? Who long have they worked there? (Remember staffing can and does change, the long-term care field has one of the highest turnover rates.)
 - b. Is staff available to meet **scheduled and unscheduled needs** (such as during the night)?
3. Is there a **NIGHT STAFF ON DUTY**
4. What language does the staff speak?
5. Will staff plan for your activities, such as a hair appointment or exercise?
6. How flexible will they be in working out a plan of care *with you* to meet your needs?
7. **Beliefs:** Are there religious or other personal beliefs that might prevent staff from providing the needed care?

Care Services & Activities

1. **Activities:** are there regularly planned activities? Can they implement your desires & requests?
2. **Resident Mix** – ideally, mental status should be compatible your loved one
 - a. Are [some] residents comparable to your loved one in terms of mental status?
 - b. Do residents socialize with each other? Do they appear happy and comfortable?
 - c. Note dementia vs. oriented residents
3. Ask current residents about how they like the home and staff (be aware that demented clients can be anxious and paranoid).
4. **Medical & Specialized Care:**
 - a. Ask about visiting doctors, nurses, podiatrists, and emergency assistance.
 - b. If PT/OT is needed, will they coordinate and follow care & exercise instructions?
 - c. Are emergency procedures clearly posted?
5. **Medical appointments & transportation:**
 - a. Who will take you to medical appointments?
 - b. Can provider arrange for transportation on short notice?
6. **Care continuum:**
 - a. What's the facility's policy regarding the level of care they will provide?
 - b. Will you be asked to leave if care needs increase? If so, at which point.
 - c. Ask about cost if more care becomes necessary
7. What **Recreational Activities** are available?
8. **House Policies:** can you get a copy of house policies and resident rights?
9. Ask about visiting hours and pets.
10. Must everyone get up and eat at the same time or is the home flexible?



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Administration, Costs, and Finances

11. Administration & Ownership:

- a. How long has the current administration been in place?
- b. **Is the PROVIDER a medical professional (LPN, RN)?** If so, do they work OUTSIDE the home? How many days/hours?

12. Costs & Rates: Get this information in writing if possible.

- a. What services are covered by the daily/monthly fee?
- b. Additional charges not covered by the above rate?
- c. Paying for **nurse delegation**... who will?

13. Refunds: what happens if you leave before the end of a month? After death?

14. Rate increases: when, why/circumstances, and how much?

15. Medicaid Policy: is Medicaid payment accepted? What about transferring to Medicaid at a later date?

- a. Do they require "3rd party supplementation"?

16. Admission and/or residency agreements: request and review BEFORE moving-in.

Food Service

1. Is there a menu?
2. Is the food pleasing, nutritious, adequate, and attractively served?
3. Are snacks available?
4. Are there specific meal times, or can you snack throughout the day or evening?
5. Will the facility meet your dietary or cultural food preferences? Can residents request special foods?

Remember that Mr. Spada, LPN is here to support seniors and families by providing information and knowledgeable insight. So feel free to call and get your questions answered. Let him be your "inside man"! There is no cost or obligation.

Good luck in your search.