

Families Come First— Choosing a Nursing Home



THE SAD TRUTH

Nursing homes are typically chosen with less than 24 hours notice and is usually based upon the recommendations of the hospital's social worker and/or availability of nursing home beds in your area.

MAKE A LIST

Ask family, friends, co-workers, church members and neighbors about their experience with local nursing homes and find out which facilities have the best reputation. Talk to current and former residents about their experience.



BE PROACTIVE and start the process early.

- ✓ **Get on the waiting list** as soon as possible.
- ✓ **Carefully read the links** listed on each nursing home's Florida Agency for Health Care Administration page (ahca.myflorida.com). The most important information comes from the state and federal facility surveys. Carefully review the most recent survey results. Deficiencies involving resident care may indicate serious care issues or poor management.
- ✓ **Personally visit** each nursing home and speak to the administrator, director of nursing and admissions coordinator about the facility and their plan of care for your loved one.
- ✓ **Compare local nursing homes** using the Nursing Home Compare tool at Medicare.gov.
- ✓ **Google the facilities** you are seriously considering. Review each facility's website carefully. See if there is any negative information posted about the facility—whether it be online complaints, lawsuits, etc.



REQUEST A TOUR.

Try to go at meal time to see how much staff is present and if the residents are dressed and ready for meals. See if the staff is assisting residents as needed. Go back to the facility at a different time on a weekend day to see how much staff is present and caring for the residents.

DON'T SETTLE FOR MINIMUMS.



If there is very little visible staff and residents are lined up in the hallways in wheelchairs, this is a warning sign that the facility is inadequately staffed. Ask about their resident-to-nursing-staff ratios during day, night and weekend shifts. It is well known that high resident-to-nursing-staff ratios can lead to poor care and outcomes.

It is very important to note that State of Florida **minimum staffing requirements** are just that: minimum staffing requirements. The law requires every nursing home to have enough staff to meet the needs of the residents even if that means exceeding state minimum guidelines. So, depending on the needs of that particular facility's residents, state minimum staffing levels may be adequate or grossly inadequate. Inadequate staffing levels leads to poor care and outcomes.

FIND THE RIGHT CARE.

For example, if your loved one has Alzheimer's disease, does the facility have a dedicated locked unit? The same applies to IV antibiotics, physical therapy, etc. Problems with resident care occur because the facility is not properly staffed and/or equipped to handle certain types of residents, but accepts them anyway to "fill a bed" or "get a higher reimbursement rate."



AVOID ARBITRATION.



Review the paperwork at home and comb over the "fine print" very carefully.



Watch out for "arbitration agreements." Many nursing home admission contracts contain these agreements, which essentially mean that you will agree not to file a lawsuit if your loved one is injured or killed through the negligence of the nursing home staff.



Do not sign arbitration agreements. They are extremely one-sided and typically require your loved one to sign away important legal rights. Take a pen and cross out that part of the contract (yes, you can do this).



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