



81 Elmwood Way, Waynesville, North Carolina 28786 Phone: (828) 356-2800; Fax: (828) 452-6761

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A NURSING FACILITY

Every nursing facility is different. It will take time to find the one most suited for your loved one. Try to involve the patient as much as possible in the process.

Pre-visit Investigation

- Make a list of nursing homes close enough for family and friends to conveniently visit the patient
- If your loved one will need assistance from Medicaid and/or Medicare in paying for their stay, list only those nursing homes that participate in the Medicare and Medicaid programs
- Learn as much as possible about each nursing home by talking with:
 - People that have loved ones in nursing homes
 - Ministers
 - Health Professionals such as doctors, social workers, nurses
 - Long Term Care Ombudsman (call Area Agency on Aging at 586-1962)
 - Nursing home employees
- Review state survey inspection reports for each facility
 - Posted in each facility (by law) & available at www.medicare.gov/NHCompare/home.asp

VISIT AND EVALUATE EACH NURSING FACILITY

Observe

- Do patients appear happy and well taken care of?
- Is the building clean and well maintained?
- Are wheelchairs and other equipment clean and in working order?
- Are activity calendars posted with a sufficient number & variety of activities for patients to choose from?
- Are patients involved in activities or just sitting around bored with nothing to do?
- Does the food look appetizing and are patients eating most of their meal?
- Does the dining room and kitchen look clean and are cooks wearing hairnets?
- Do the patients look well fed?
- Are the rooms neatly arranged and individually decorated with personal possessions of patients?
- Do staff members interact cheerfully with patients and each other?
- Do staff and administration seem comfortable with each other?
- Are patient call lights responded to quickly?
- Does the facility overuse physical restraints (devices that tie the patients to chairs or bed)?
- Are staff members responsive to patient or family member needs and requests?
- Are staff members visible?

- Are patients treated with dignity and respect?
- Does the linen look clean and not old and thin?
- Is there an outdoor patio for patients and family to use?
- Is patient privacy protected during patient care/treatment (are room doors and privacy curtains used)?
- Do staff members stop and knock on room doors prior to entering patient rooms?
- Is the facility well lighted?

Listen

- Are call lights sounding for a long time before being answered?
- Are patients calling out for help?
- Is patient care and information being discussed within hearing range of others?
- Is there an excess amount of noise in the facility caused by staff, intercom, etc.?

Smell

- Do patients smell clean?
- Are there any strong odors in the facility?
- Are rooms well ventilated and kept at a comfortable temperature?

Taste

- Ask to eat a meal and evaluate the quality and taste of the food.

Ask Staff

- What special services are provided by facility (transportation, beauty shop, store, etc.)?
- Is there a wheelchair accessible van available?
- What is done for patients who are depressed? Is counseling available?
- Is there a high turnover in employees?
- What kind of therapies are provided for residents on Medicaid?
- Is there an active patient council and/or family council? When and how often do they meet?
- Do you like your work?
- What do you like best about working here? What do you like least about working here?
- If you could improve or change one thing about this nursing home, what would that be?
- When do you use restraints?
- How many patients do you directly care for?
- Do you ever work short of staff?
- How often are patients checked on in their rooms?
- What happens when someone has a complaint or problem? How is it handled?
- Are snacks available if wanted by patients?

Ask Residents and Family Members

- What is the best thing and worst thing about this nursing home?
- Are you glad you chose this nursing home?
- Is the staff helpful and caring?
- Does the staff meet your needs?
- What happens when you voice a complaint or concern?
- Were you involved in choosing your own room and roommate?
- Is the food good and do you get enough to eat?
- Have you ever had missing possessions?

- Does each shift have enough help?
- Does the staff treat you with respect and dignity?
- Are you able to pursue personal interests such as reading or gardening?
- Do you get outside as often as you wish?
- How often do they check on you when you're in your room?
- Does the staff provide needed assistance with toileting, bathing, dressing and eating?
- Do you attend and enjoy the activities provided in the nursing home?
- Are you invited to care plan meetings?
- Does the staff close the door and pull the privacy curtains when they provide care?