

# Choosing the right long term care facility for a loved one

Wednesday, May 6, 2020

by Jenna Jaeger, Admissions Coordinator

Making the decision to place a loved one in a long-term care facility can be difficult. Feelings of guilt and sadness are often there, despite how necessary the decision may be. There are many situations where a long-term care facility can provide the expertise needed to care for your loved one and it doesn't have to be as sad as you imagine it to be. There are wonderful facilities that provide excellent care.

“Where do I even start?” This is often the question adult children ask themselves when looking for long-term care for a loved one. Like everything else these days, your search probably begins on the Internet. A successful search requires digging into the details of each facility, such as the living environment, the staff and caregivers, food, activities, policies, safety features, etc. Once you've narrowed your search down to your top three living facilities, you should plan to take a tour.



Here are some questions to ask yourself and the facility during your tour.

- Take a look around. Is the staff appropriate? Observe.
- Pay attention to whether staff members interact closely with residents and know their names. Is the atmosphere warm and friendly?
- Are the residents clean and well groomed?
- With regard to safety, are fire escapes and ramps wide enough for wheelchairs?
- Are the floors clean and non-slippery?
- Are there handrails in the hallways?
- What is the staff-to-resident ratio?
- Does the staff have to go through any training to work with residents with dementia?
- How often are residents bathed?
- Are individual care plans maintained for each resident?
- How often are care plan meetings held?
- How does a resident get medical attention and is there a doctor available on site?
- Are there specific visiting hours for families and visitors, and if so, what are they?
- What is the facility response when a resident is having difficulty adjusting?
- What kinds of structured activities are scheduled throughout the week?
- Can the kitchen accommodate a special diet?

It's no doubt that finding the right facility for your loved one is challenging and overwhelming. You'll also want to find out other important details. This includes asking the following questions as well:

- What are the basic costs and what is covered?

- Are there additional charges for care and what are those?
- How are medications obtained?
- Where are the resident's rights posted, and what are they?
- Is the facility license displayed?
- When was the last state inspection conducted? Were there any deficiencies or citations?

Finally, trust your instincts. Even if everything you find in your search is presents well, pay attention to any doubts or uncertainty you are having. Ask yourself – “Would I want to be here?” Only you know your loved one. Be sure to consider all your options. You will be glad you did.

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