

CHOOSING A NURSING HOME

Print this out as an easy scorecard when you visit a nursing home.

SOME CRUCIAL QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN CHOOSING A NURSING HOME

Score each question like a report card (A+ to F) so you can compare your findings and recall your impressions later.

Rating

Inspections: Where are the state inspection reports, known as "2567" reports? They should be easily accessible to the public. If not, the facility can be cited.

Rating

Your needs: What's the facility's track record for your special needs? For example, if your relative wanders, has the facility been cited for residents walking away? If your loved one is bedridden, what is its track record on pressure sores?

Rating

Insurance: What type of insurance does the home accept? If Medicare runs out, does the facility accept Medicaid for patients who qualify?

Rating

Flexibility: How strict is the facility's routine? Some residents find comfort in schedules; others want flexibility for things such as meal times.

Rating

Reforms: If the facility has been cited for serious violations, what changes were made to prevent future problems? If the facility is well-rated, how did it get there?

Rating

Food: Visit during a meal and look at the food, the residents and the staff. Is the food tempting? Are residents engaged or waiting for help? Is there an alternative meal selection?

Rating

Pets: Are pets allowed? What about visitors who want to bring pets?

Rating

Individuality: Can residents decorate their rooms as they wish?

Rating

Family input: Will the resident and family members be involved with development of care plans?

Rating

Specialized help: What about special accommodations — religious services, social activities, transportation to community activities?

For more information and a four-page checklist to help with nursing home selection, visit www.medicare.gov/NHcompare or call 800-633-4227.

SOURCES: U.S. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services; Michigan's Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program

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FINDING INFORMATION:

■ Michigan Office of Services to the Aging, which includes information on your local Area Agency on Aging: www.michigan.gov/miseniors or 517-373-8230.

■ Michigan Medicare/Medicaid Assistance Program: www.mmapinc.org or 800-803-7174.

■ AARP: www.aarp.org/decide.

■ National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care: www.theconsumervoice.org or 202-332-2275.

FINDING HELP:

■ To reach your local ombudsman, visit: www.ltombudsman.org/ombudsman/michigan or call 866-485-9393

■ To file complaints with the Michigan Bureau of Health Systems, which oversees nursing homes, go to: www.michigan.gov/bhs.

Under BHS programs, click on "Health Facility Complaints and Investigations." Or call 800-882-6006.

■ To request an inspection report under the Freedom of Information Act, e-mail MDCH-BHS-FOIA@michigan.gov or call 517-241-2650.

FINDING NURSING HOME ALTERNATIVES:

■ Michigan Office of Services to the Aging: www.michigan.gov/miseniors, choose "Michigan Medicaid Waiver Program" in the Helpful Senior Programs box, or call 517-373-8230.

■ The U.S. Administration on Aging provides an eldercare locator to connect users with information and services: www.eldercare.gov or 800-677-1116.