

## A Guide to Selecting a Personal Care Home

The following checklist is intended as a convenient reference for use when visiting several homes. Remember, the most important consideration in any choice is the individual's specific situation. The elderly resident often has different needs than the young resident. The ambulatory resident has different needs than does the bedridden. While the emphasis you place on any question is up to you, keep in mind that you can't change the resident to fit the home. You must select the home that meets the needs of the resident.

### *Licensure*

- Is the home operating on a full or provisional license?
- If the home has a provisional license were there major deficiencies in the care program or safety at the last inspection?
- Does the administrator have a current certificate from the state?

### *Location*

- Is the home pleasing to the resident?
- Is the home convenient for the resident's personal physician?
- Is the home near a cooperating hospital?
- Is the home near a hospital where your personal physician practices?

### *Action Prevention*

- Is the home well lighted inside?
- Is the home free of hazards underfoot?
- Are chairs sturdy and not easily tipped?

### *Fire Safety*

- Does the home meet federal and/or state codes?
- Are exits clearly identifiable and unobstructed?
- Are written emergency evacuation plans posted with floor plans throughout the facility?
- Are fire drills conducted?
- Are exit doors unlocked on the inside?
- If the home has a special unit for wandering residents that uses a locking system on doors, is the system one that opens at times of fire or electrical failure?

### *Bedrooms*

- Do bedrooms open onto the hall?
- Does each resident room have a window?
- Is there at least one comfortable chair per resident?
- Is there a clothes closet or separate set of drawers for each resident?
- Is there room for a wheelchair to maneuver if needed?
- Is care used in selecting roommates?
- Is there easy access to each bed?
- Is there a form of audible communication from the bedroom to the staff?

### *Cleanliness*

- Is the facility as clean as you set your personal standards?
- Is the facility free of unpleasant odors?

### *Lobby/Entrance Area*

- Is the atmosphere welcoming?
- Is the furniture attractive and comfortable?
- Is there a bulletin board with the activities schedule?
- Are certificates and licenses on display?

### *Hallways*

- Are halls well lighted and spacious?

### *Dining Room*

- Is the dining area attractive and inviting?
- Are tables convenient for those in wheelchairs?
- Is food tasty and attractively served?
- Is time adequate to eat meals?
- Do meals match posted menu?
- Are those needing help receiving it?

### *Kitchen*

- Is food, needing refrigeration not standing on counters?
- Does kitchen help observe sanitation rules? (e.g.: Is hand washing mandated for staff?)

### *Activity Rooms*

- Are rooms available for resident activities? This may be the family room or living room in small homes.
- Is equipment (such as games, easels, yarn, kiln, etc.) available?
- Are residents using equipment?

### *Special Purpose Rooms*

- Is privacy assured in the resident's room for physical examinations or therapy?
- Are rooms available for private visits with family and friends?

### *Toilet Facilities*

- Are toilets convenient to bedrooms?
- Are they easy for a wheelchair resident to use?
- Is there a sink in each bathroom?
- Are hand grips on or near toilets?

- Do bathtubs and showers have non-slip surfaces and hand grips?

#### **Grounds**

- Is there easy access for the handicapped?
- Is outdoor furniture available for residents and visitors?
- Are hazardous objects in resident walkways?

#### **Medical**

- Is a physician available in an emergency?
- Are personal physicians allowed?
- Is regular medical attention assured?
- Are medical records and plans of care kept?
- Are residents involved in plans for treatment?
- Is confidentiality of medical records assured?
- Are other medical services (dentists, podiatrists, optometrists) available?
- Will the resident's personal physician be notified in an emergency?
- Does the facility report periodically to the resident's personal physician?

#### **Care Planning**

- Does the home provide services for the terminally ill residents and their families?
- Does the home have an Alzheimer's disease program?
- Does the home care for mentally ill?

#### **Hospitalization**

- Does the home have an arrangement with a nearby hospital?
- Is emergency transportation readily available?

#### **Qualified Staff**

- Are qualified and trained staff employed by the home/facility?

#### **Medications/Pharmacy**

- Is assistance provided in handling resident medications?
- Is a pharmacist available for staff and patient consultation?

#### **Religious Observances**

- Are arrangements made for residents to worship as they please?

#### **Therapy Program**

- Is there a physical therapy program available under the direction of a qualified physical therapist?
- Are toilets convenient to bedrooms?
- Are they easy for a wheelchair resident to use?
- Is there a sink in each bathroom?
- Are hand grips on or near toilets?

- Do bathtubs and showers have non-slip surfaces and hand grips?

- Are resident preferences observed?
- Are group and individual activities available?
- Are residents encouraged to participate?
- Are outside trips planned?
- Do volunteers work with residents?

#### **Social Services**

- Is a social worker available to assist residents and families?

#### **Food**

- Are meals nutritionally balanced?
- Are personal likes and dislikes taken into consideration?
- Does the menu vary from meal to meal?
- Is plenty of time allowed for each meal?
- Are snacks available?
- Are warm foods served warm?
- Does staff assist residents who need help with eating?
- If a resident has an out-of-house appointment, is his/her meal made available early or after return?
- Are meals served to the resident in his/her room when sick?

#### **Grooming**

- Is assistance in bathing and grooming available?
- Are meals served to the resident in his/her room when sick?

#### **Staff Attitudes**

- Does staff show interest in and affection for individual residents?
- Is staff courteous?
- Is the administrator available to answer questions, hear complaints, or discuss problems?
- Does staff respond quickly to resident calls for assistance?
- Does staff know residents by name?

#### **Resident Rights**

- Does the home have a written description of resident rights and responsibilities?
- Is staff to protect resident dignity and privacy?

#### **Costs/Financial Matters**

- Are all services covered in the basic daily/monthly charge?
- If not, is a list of specific services not covered in the basic rate available? (Some homes have schedules covering linen, TV, personal telephone, transportation, haircuts, shampoos, pedicures, dental care, etc.)
- Are advance payments returned if the resident leaves the home?

- Are persons receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI) accepted in the home?
- What third party costs are involved?
- Are only private pay residents accepted?
- If financial management offered as a service to the resident?

***Your Part***

If you are selecting a personal care home for someone else, are you:

- Involving this person in the choice?
- Prepared to ease the resident's transition to the personal care home by being with him/her on admission day and staying a few hours to get him/her settled in?

- Ready to visit the resident frequently and to make sure that his friends make similar visits?
- Willing to provide the resident with the same amount of love in the personal care home as you would if he/she were at home?

***Waiting for Placement***

After you have identified an appropriate home, you may find there is no vacancy. Put your name on the waiting list. In the meantime, check alternatives such as day care, night care, home health agencies and other community resources that might help meet immediate needs.