

## Nursing Homes and Adult Care Homes

### How do I choose a nursing home?

Planning ahead is one of the best ways to ease the stress that accompanies choosing a nursing home. Unfortunately, such decisions are often thrust upon us in times of crisis. Nevertheless, there are several steps you should always consider before selecting a nursing home. To begin with, you must determine what services are needed. There are many care and service options aside from the more intensive nursing home care. These include home health care, adult day care, adult care homes, and assisted living facilities. After you have determined the needs of the prospective resident and the type of lifestyle he or she will want to enjoy, it is a good idea to seek referrals. These referrals may come from friends and acquaintances who have been in similar situations, or they may come from your family physician, religious organizations, hospital discharge planners/social workers, state nursing home associations, and the [Ombudsman Program](#).

Once you have an initial list of facilities, you should contact them and inquire if they are Medicaid and Medicare certified, if there are available beds, what type of care is offered, what is the typical resident profile, and what are the admission requirements.

1. [Nursing Homes](#)
2. [Adult Care Homes](#)

With the newly refined list, you can check with your long-term care ombudsman and the Division of Health Service Regulation for the latest facility survey information, complaint activity, and resolution of any identified issues.

Now you are ready to visit your remaining facilities. Try to visit the facilities at different times and on multiple occasions in order to determine what the nursing home is really like. When visiting you should talk to residents. Finding out what they think of the facility, what types of activities are available, and if they have a resident council will be invaluable. Also note how the nurses and aides treat the residents. Are residents addressed in a respectful manner? Are the residents well groomed and dressed? Be careful to evaluate the physical nature of the home. Is there an odor, are there clearly marked exits, are residents aimlessly sitting or wandering the halls, and are the bathrooms well lighted and conducive to impaired individuals? Another key concern is how favorable is the location of the facility for visits from family and friends. There is really no substitute for attentive family and friends visiting with the resident.

During your visit, you should meet with the administrator. When you meet with this person be sure to cover such areas as restraint use, the number of personal care staff per resident, staff turnover, visiting policies, roommate pairing procedures, how often physicians visit, and how they view care plans. Be sure to ask to see a list of the meals for the month. You may want to sample or at least see a meal. Noting the activity list and

number of residents engaged is also important. Finally, you will want to know the facility's cost and financing options to know if it is in your price range.

After you have selected your nursing home, be sure to carefully read the contract. It might be a good idea to have an attorney or ombudsman read it over before you sign. Make sure the home is a place that will suit the lifestyle and needs of the individual. Going with your intuition and gut feeling is perhaps the most important step in the process.

### **How do I get help with a complaint about care in a nursing home or adult care home?**

[The North Carolina Long Term Care Ombudsman Program](#) investigates and attempts to resolve the concerns or complaints of residents and families as effectively as possible. The ombudsmen work with facility staff and with public and private agencies on behalf of residents who need assistance. Residents and others making complaints are involved to the extent they choose to be. Identities of residents and complainants, along with the information shared with the Ombudsman Program are kept confidential unless the person making the complaint consents to such information being released. The ombudsman provides guidance and assistance on concerns including:

1. Medical and personal services being provided to residents such as problems with medication, nutrition and hygiene
2. Financial concerns such as handling of residents' funds, Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security
3. Rights of residents, such as the right to be treated with courtesy and to have individual requests and preferences respected; and
4. Administrative decisions such as admission to or discharge from a nursing home

For regulatory complaints within nursing homes, the Division of Health Service Regulation also maintains a Complaints Investigation Unit. This unit investigates regulatory complaints within nursing homes (919) 855-4500 or call toll free 1-800-624-3004. For regulatory complaints within adult care homes, there are Adult Home Specialists within each county department of social services available to look into complaints and concerns.

Complaints of immediate life-threatening conditions as well as abuse, neglect and misappropriation are also referred to [Adult Protective Services](#) within each county department of social service.