Is physical therapy available for as long as the resident needs it? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Does the staff have special training to deal with dementia? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Are there special units, programs, or services for special needs, such as Alzheimer's? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Quality of Life:

Are residents' rights posted? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Does the staff knock before entering a resident's room? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Are the doors shut when a resident is being dressed or bathed? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Is the facility an easy place for family and friends to visit? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Does the nursing home meet cultural, religious, or language needs? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Does the nursing home have outdoor areas for residents and help for residents who want to spend time outside? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Are the residents allowed to make choices about daily routine (for example, when to go to bed, when to get up, when to bathe, or when to eat)? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Are the residents allowed to have personal articles and furniture in their rooms? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Is the staff friendly, considerate, and helpful? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Does the facility have a friendly, home-like environment? ☐ Yes ☐ No

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Nursing Homes: **Asking the Right Questions**

Sometimes the need for a nursing home comes suddenly or unexpectedly. Often, it comes when your loved one is in the hospital with a serious medical condition or injury. Choosing a home can be very difficult. Early planning and visiting can make this process easier.

You are the best judge of how many nursing homes you can visit, but try to see at least three so you can make comparisons. If possible, ask the loved one who will be living in the nursing home and other family members to visit the nursing homes with you.

Your visit will give you the chance to view care firsthand; talk to staff, residents, and other families; taste the food and observe the activities. It is always best to visit a facility at least twice. Make one of the visits unscheduled, during the weekend or evening, when staffing problems will be most obvious.

Talk with the nursing staff about the kind of care your loved one needs and make sure the facility can provide it.

- Is transportation available so the resident can visit his or her own doctor?
- Is physical therapy available for as long as the resident needs it?
- Does the staff have special training dealing with dementia?
- Are there special units, programs, or services for special needs such as Alzheimer's?

One thing to consider when choosing a nursing home is location. Try to find one that family and friends can visit often. People in nursing homes who have regular visitors usually get better care. Use your visits to observe carefully, and do not discount your personal feelings. The checklist in the Tip Sheet can help you compare the different facilities you visit.

Nursing Homes: **Asking the Right Questions**

Facility Name _____

Address _____

Check: **First Visit** ☐ **Second Visit** ☐ **Date(s) Visited:**

Morning ☐ **Afternoon** ☐ **Evening** ☐

Circle: **Mon** **Tue** **Wed** **Thu** **Fri** **Sat** **Sun**

You may want to attach the facility's rate sheet for easier comparison.

The Basics:

Is the facility **Medicare** certified? ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

Is the facility **Medicaid** certified? ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

Has the license ever been revoked? ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

_____

Is the facility accepting new patients? ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

_____

Is there a waiting period for admission? ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

_____

Does the facility conduct background checks on all of the staff? ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

_____

How many licensed nurses are on duty at each shift? _____

RNs _____ LPNs _____

What is the patient to staff ratio? _____

Nurse to patient? _____ Aide to patient? _____

Does the nursing home have an active family council? ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

What is the visiting policy? _____

_____

What is the facility's discharge policy? _____

_____

Is transportation available so the resident can visit the doctor? ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

_____

Are the care planning meetings held at times that are easy for residents and their family members to attend? ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

Safety:

Are stairs and hallways well lighted? ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

Are exits well marked? ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

Do the hallways have handrails? ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

Do rooms and bathrooms have grab bars and call buttons? ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

Are there safety locks on the doors and windows? ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

Are there security and fire safety systems? ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

Is there an emergency generator or alternate power source? ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

Is the floor plan logical and easy to follow? ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

_____

_____

Care Issues:

Does the facility have a fresh smell? ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

_____

Are residents clean and well groomed? ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

_____

Do staff interact well with residents? ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

_____

_____

Are residents participating in activities and exercise? ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

Do the residents have the same caregivers on a daily basis? ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

_____

Does the staff respond quickly to calls for help? ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

Is there fresh water available in the rooms? ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

Does the food look and smell good? ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

Are the residents offered choices of food at mealtimes? ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

_____

Are the residents who need assistance eating or drinking receiving it? ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

_____

Are there nutritious snacks available throughout the day and evening? ☐ **Yes** ☐ **No**

_____