

## 10 QUESTIONS TO ANSWER...

### Before Choosing a Nursing or Assisted-Living Home for Your Loved One

1. Have you made a list of the assisted-living or nursing home options that meet your particular needs?

**Fact:** Your Long-Term Care Ombudsman can give you a list of licensed assisted living or certified nursing homes that meet your specific criteria. For example, the Ombudsman can help you identify homes that: offer special services such as dementia or AIDS care; accept a specific financing method such as Medicaid; and are located in a geographic area that is close to those who will visit. To reach your Long-Term Care Ombudsman, contact your local Area Agency on Aging, the National Eldercare Locator, or the National Ombudsman Resource Center.

**Web resource:** <http://www.eldercare.gov/Eldercare.NET/Public/Home.aspx>

**Web resource:** [www.medicare.gov/NHCompare/home.asp](http://www.medicare.gov/NHCompare/home.asp)

**Web resource:** <http://www.ltombudsman.org/>

2. Did you obtain additional information and take a tour of the assisted-living or nursing homes that meet the options on your list?

**Fact:** To narrow down your nursing home or assisted living choices and find the options that best meet your needs, you can take a tour and meet with the assisted living home Administrator or nursing home Director of Nursing at the homes on your list. Ask your Ombudsman for a list of questions that you should ask. Financing, staffing ratios, resident satisfaction, included and extra-cost services, and recent state inspection results are all important topics to cover. You can learn more from NCCNHR: The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care (formerly known as the National Citizens' Coalition for Nursing Home Reform) or the National Center for Assisted Living.

**Web resource:** [www.nccnhr.org](http://www.nccnhr.org)

**Web resource:** [www.ncal.org](http://www.ncal.org)

3. During your tours, did you carefully look at each facility's state inspection results?

**Fact:** The inspection results must be posted in a public place in each home. A lower rating means fewer problems, so look for a facility that has a rating below the statewide average.

4. During each tour, did you ask to speak privately with one or more resident aides, direct care workers, or Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs)?

**Fact:** You can learn a lot about a home's staff and environment by talking to a resident aide, direct care worker, CNA or Registered Nurse (RN) regarding training, job satisfaction, average length of employment, and how he or she is recognized for work well done.

5. During each tour, did you speak to current residents' family members?

**Fact:** A good way to learn about a home's environment is to speak to current residents' family members. Try to talk to at least two family members who are visiting loved ones at each home. Ask them about their satisfaction with the home's environment and care.

6. Have you considered your loved one's stated desires and lifetime preferences?

**Fact:** When evaluating a home's atmosphere, size, feeling, light, food, and flexibility, it is important to consider what is most compatible with your loved one's stated desires and most consistent with his or her lifetime preferences.

7. If you were choosing a home for yourself, where would you be happiest?

**Fact:** Your instincts can tell you a lot about a home. While you must consider your loved one's stated desires and lifetime preferences first, make sure to also consider your level of comfort in each home.

8. As the friend or family member of a potential resident, which home makes you feel the most welcome?

**Fact:** You will likely play an integral role in the long-term care of your loved one, so when evaluating homes, you should consider where you see yourself most likely to become part of the "family." Try to envision yourself getting to know the staff, visiting at different times of the day and night, participating in the development of a care plan for your loved one, helping with special activities, or perhaps serving on the Family Council.

9. Did you make a list of what you like and do not like about each home to see how they compare?

**Fact:** A side-by-side comparison can help you choose the best home for your loved one. Just remember: no home is perfect, and your involvement will always improve your loved one's experience.

10. Can you now choose a home with a caring environment, below-average survey ratings, high staff-to-patient ratios, a setting honoring individuality and preferences, and feel as good as possible about this choice for your loved one?

**Fact:** If the answer to this question is no, you should look at more homes!