

20 Essential Questions to Ask Before Choosing a Nursing Home - Checklist

Choosing a nursing home for a loved one is an important and often difficult decision. To ensure your family finds the best fit, it's essential to ask the right questions before moving in. This guide covers 20 key questions to ask nursing homes to evaluate their services, staff, and overall quality of care.

How to use this checklist: Check off each question as you ask it, and use the note lines to record important answers and observations.

Facility Overview

1. What is the overall rating and inspection history of the nursing home?

The facility's star rating and inspection reports from regulatory agencies can reveal important insights about quality of care, safety, and compliance.

Notes:

2. What types of care and services does the nursing home provide?

Understand the full range of medical, therapeutic, and lifestyle services offered to ensure they meet your loved one's needs.

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3. What is the staff-to-resident ratio, and what are the staff's qualifications?

Adequate, well-trained staffing is crucial for providing attentive, high-quality care. Understanding these ratios can help evaluate the facility's capabilities.

Notes:

4. What security measures are in place to keep residents safe?

Safety and security features like security cameras, door alarms, and secure outdoor areas are important, especially for residents with dementia or Alzheimer's.

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Resident Experience

1. What are the daily schedules, activities, and lifestyle options for residents?

A vibrant activity schedule and lifestyle options that keep residents engaged and stimulated are signs of a high-quality nursing home.

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2. How do staff communicate with residents and families?

Open, transparent communication between staff, residents, and families is critical for maintaining trust and ensuring the best possible care.

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3. What are the visiting hours and policies for family members?

Flexible visiting policies that accommodate family schedules help maintain important social connections for residents.

Notes:

4. How does the facility handle complaints and address resident concerns?

Understanding the facility's complaint resolution process can give insight into how well they respond to and advocate for resident needs.

Notes:

Care Quality

1. What medical services and therapies are available on-site?

On-site access to medical care, rehabilitation, and other therapies can improve resident outcomes and quality of life.

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2. How does the facility prevent and manage common issues like pressure sores and infections?

Asking about the facility's protocols for preventing and treating common care issues can reveal their commitment to resident health and safety.

Notes:

3. What is the facility's approach to managing challenging behaviors like agitation or wandering?

Understanding how the nursing home supports residents with dementia or other behavioral health needs is essential, especially for those with memory-related conditions.

Notes:

4. What is the facility's policy regarding the use of restraints and psychoactive medications?

Limiting the use of restraints and psychoactive drugs is an important indicator of a resident-centered, harm-reduction approach to care.

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Costs and Billing

1. What are the daily or monthly rates, and what do they cover?

Detailed information about base rates, as well as any additional fees for specialized services, is crucial for understanding the full financial commitment.

Notes:

2. What insurance plans or financial assistance programs does the facility accept?

Knowing which payment options the facility accepts can help determine if it's the right fit for your family's financial situation.

Notes:

3. Are there any hidden fees or unexpected costs I should be aware of?

Asking about potential additional charges, such as for supplies, transportation, or activities, can help you budget accurately.

Notes:

4. What is the process for handling billing disputes or changes in care needs?

Understanding the facility's billing policies and procedures for addressing changing care requirements can help avoid surprises down the line.

Notes:

Personal Considerations

1. Does the facility accommodate specific cultural, religious, or dietary needs?

Ensuring the nursing home can meet your loved one's personal preferences and requirements is important for their overall comfort and well-being.

Notes:

2. Can residents have personal items, furniture, or decor in their rooms?

The ability to personalize living spaces can make the transition to a nursing home feel less institutional and more like home.

Notes:

3. What is the process for transitioning a new resident into the facility?

A thoughtful, supportive onboarding process can help ease the adjustment and make your loved one feel welcome and cared for.

Notes:
