

How to Choose a Senior Living Facility



Helping Seniors Make Informed Decisions

Eleven tips that dispel myths, provide insight and offer sound advice from Senior Living Professionals.

How to Choose a Senior Living Facility



When evaluating senior living options, becoming knowledgeable is key to making good choices.

We hope you will utilize this information to make you aware of the important factors to consider when making your senior living choice.

1. YOU make the choice.

As with any healthcare decision, YOU make the final determination on which facility will be responsible for the care of you or your loved one. If you are admitted to a hospital, a member of the case management team will most likely be the individual responsible for helping you understand which facilities are available in the geographic location that you would like to reside. The case manager can not and should not guide you or make the decision for you. After completing all steps in this guide you should be able to make this very important decision.



2. Comfort and Care are the most important requisites

When it comes to the care of you or a loved one, you want to be absolutely certain that you have chosen a facility that possesses the skills to not only take care of you or your loved one, but the family as well. As a potential resident or the family of a resident, you'll want to make sure communication with staff appears comfortable and all are knowledgeable. Ask about the tenure of the staff, especially administrative staff, how long have they been working together? Are all staff happy to be working there? Do they appear to enjoy their job? All of these are important questions for you to know in order to ensure care and comfort.



3. Know what your insurance can and can't do

If you have private insurance, now would be a good time to see what kind of coverage your insurance provides for a stay at a nursing facility regardless of the length of time that you expect to stay. It is important that you select a facility that has expertise at knowing the policies and procedures of many different insurance companies. This expertise will make your admissions process a smooth one, and could ultimately save you a significant amount of money if you are facing out of pocket expenses. It is a good idea to compare rates at each facility, not only for the daily rate, but any ancillary costs such as supplies for care including bandages or incontinence products, transportation, and additional charges for routine services such as assistance with feeding or toileting. All of these will play a role in how much you may have to pay out of pocket if your insurance does not provide coverage.





4. Find a Medicare expert

Medicare can often be the most difficult part to understand for a family making a determination on a nursing facility. While the basics can be easy to understand, there may be certain factors that need the expertise of a seasoned admissions department to ensure that your benefits are not lost to loopholes in the Medicare system. There are certain requirements that must be met in order for Medicare to cover your stay at a nursing facility. If you are at a hospital, you'll want to ask a case manager if your stay qualifies you to coverage by Medicare. If you are not in the hospital or simply are having difficulty with your Medicare coverage, you'll want to ensure that the nursing facility that you have chosen has a designated Medicare expert that is on-hand to answer your questions and help you with the coverage that you need.

5. Who makes the decisions?

Knowing who owns the facility can tell you a lot about what to expect with the processes of care. Many large corporations have gotten into the nursing home business. Are they healthcare industry leaders or just businessmen in the business? Local management and owners makes all accountable to the customer, their neighbor or friend.



6. “I Know a Guy” does not count as research

This decision could be one of the most instrumental in determining your future health and you’ll want to be sure that you have chosen a team of experts that knows what they are doing. Using the “I know a guy that knows another guy that has a friend that went there” excuse is not considered research.

Nursing facilities are one of the most regulated in healthcare, and because of that, there are some great resources that will educate you about each facility. The Illinois Department of Public Health also does annual surveys of each facility and you will be able to see each facility’s results as well as any complaints that have been considered “founded” and more. However, only skilled nursing facilities go through these types of rigorous compliance based processes, so if you are simply looking for an assisted living facility or independent living, you’ll need to know this oversight protection is not provided.





7. Tour EVERY facility and EVERY floor

The absolute best way to gauge the skill and knowledge of a staff is to experience it first hand. Tour every facility available to you when you are looking for the right place for care. During a tour, you'll experience the look and feel of each facility. However, you'll want to see the floor or wing that you or your loved one will be experiencing during a stay. Some facilities keep their main floor looking spic and span, but the rest of their facility does not look the same. While you may be looking at first staying at a Medicare unit, once your Medicare days have been used, the facility may require you to move to a different unit. Some facilities may even require you to move to another facility once all days are exhausted. Know and see all of your options.

8. Understand who does what

During your stay at a nursing facility, you're going to need the services of every department. Know going in who is responsible for what services. Whether it is nursing service, housekeeping or meals, if you have a question, you want to know who to directly go to the first time.



9. Location Location Location

Location isn't always everything. Please consider that your loved one will be within the facility 24 hours a day. Their comfort and the care they will receive may be worth family driving a few more miles for a visit.



10. Admission departments make a huge difference.

The admissions department at the facility you choose can make your stay extremely smooth or extremely difficult based on their level of expertise. A great admissions department has the ability to take care of just about any need that you'll have prior to and during admission. They should be insurance and

Medicare experts and should know the ins and outs of each insurance company. If you believe that you might be in need of Medicaid, find a nursing facility that will do the work for you. A good facility will help explain the forms and guide you through the public aid process. The admissions director should be the expert in all things "functional". Meaning, they know what happens and when, they know the daily rate at their facility and can quote it off of the top of their head, they know what other facilities offer, and they know how all of the wheels turn in their own facility. Choose the proper nursing facility and you'll most likely have a seamless transition.

11. Your religion does not restrict your facility choice

Whether you are Christian, Catholic, Buddhist, Jewish, Baptist or any other form of religion, most facilities offer services for your denomination. In fact, some facilities may offer services to more religious denominations than homes receiving funds from a distinct religious affiliation. Because you have the right to receive the sacraments from your own priest, reverend, rabbi, etc. your religious choice can be accommodated easily.



*This pamphlet is designed as a source of information and guidance for those considering a senior living facility for themselves or a loved one. These tips are provided in good faith and are not a reflection of a specific facility.



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