

L O N G - T E R M

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What You Need to Know

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW WHEN SELECTING A LONG TERM CARE FACILITY

When it is time to select a care facility for a loved one who needs more care and resources than the family can provide (even with home care nursing services), there are many issues to consider. Personal preferences will dictate the ultimate choice, in addition to affordability, availability, and situational compatibility with the needs of the individual. **The goal should always be to have a plan before care is needed.**

The term “nursing home” is a misnomer for the 21st Century. Long term care is very segmented and offers multiple levels of care and assistance. It is critical to know what level of care the person needs in order to determine correct placement (please see the “Assessment of Needs Process” for more information).

FIRST STEPS – TO DETERMINE NEEDS:

- Is 24-hour supervision needed?
- Does the person require help with normal activities of daily living?
- Is help required to take medications?
- How much and what type of social activity is needed?
- Is a private or shared room preferable?
- Do all meals need to be prepared by someone else?
- How will costs be covered?
- If the person has dementia, is a special unit needed to control wandering or behaviors?
- Is in-home care available?

Once you have determined the need, what are the questions you should be asking to make your decision on a facility? Following are some areas and questions to consider to assist you in that decision. Again, your goal should be to have a plan before care is needed.

CARE PHILOSOPHY:

- Is a copy of the program’s mission and philosophy available?
- How are issues and concerns resolved? How involved can the family become?
- Is a copy of the most recent survey (licensed setting only) available to read?

CONTINUAL PERSON ASSESSMENT AND CARE and SERVICE PLANNING:

- How are care/service plans created and reviewed?
- How are changes of condition monitored and addressed?
- Are participants allowed to make simple decisions or choices?
- Is the staff treating participants as unique individuals?
- Is the family welcomed in talking to and asking questions of the staff?

ONGOING CARE:

- How much personal care and assistance is provided and what is the cost?
- How are adequate nutrition and hydration assured?
- Is medication used to control behaviors? If so, how is that need identified and monitored?
- Are physical restraints used to control behavior?
- Are residents clean and well groomed?
- Is staff interacting with residents or each other?
- Is staff gently encouraging residents to do things for themselves?

ACTIVITIES:

- How often are organized activities offered?
- Are there organized activities also during the evenings or weekends?
- Where do activities take place? Only inside, or does this include the outdoors, trips, etc.?
- How are activities designed for persons with dementia?
- Are residents found in small groups for talking and stimulation or often found alone in their rooms without stimulation?
- Is an activity schedule posted?

STAFFING:

- What are staff qualifications and staffing levels?
- What training does staff receive? Is training for dementia or Alzheimer's offered?
- How often does staff receive training?
- What are the staffing ratios on all shifts?
- How many persons is each direct care staff responsible for?

DEMENTIA ENVIRONMENT:

- What measures are in place to provide a safe and secure environment for persons with dementia?
- Are there safe areas for independent wandering?
- Is an outdoor area safe and secure?
- Is there a pleasant dining area?
- Are personal belongings decorating person rooms?
- Are residents moving about freely?
- Are there unpleasant smells or continual loud noises that can increase agitation?

Families are urged to walk through the setting and make good observations. A repeat visit can help to determine if the atmosphere is the same as when toured previously.

When it is time to make the transition, share information about the upcoming move based upon the person's ability to understand what is happening. Bring personal belongings that are clearly marked to make the person feel at home in the new setting.

After placement, stay involved. Make physical contact by holding hands or applying lotion, hair brushing or hugs. Attend care planning meetings. Ask questions. Communicate concerns on care needs to the appropriate people. Quality of life can be high for residents of care facilities when attention is paid to details.

For further information or if you have questions, please contact the Michigan Long Term Care Ombudsman at this toll free number: 1-866-485-9393.