



# Choosing a Nursing Home

*It's very important to involve the person who is to go into the nursing home in the selection process.*

***Evaluate your elder's needs and desires, then research the options. Gather literature from potential nursing homes, then visit those that best meet those needs.***

Nursing homes are institutions that provide room, board, skilled nursing, rehabilitative care, medical services and general supervision. Usually, they also provide opportunities for socialization and recreation. Nursing homes are best for people who need constant physical and/or medical care and can no longer live independently.

In the United States, there are about 16,000 nursing homes certified by State and Federal government agencies—and as the population ages, this number is likely to increase dramatically. Depending on where you live, you may have few choices or an overwhelming number of choices. So where do you begin?

## **Involve the Care Recipient**

The best place to begin when choosing a nursing home is to involve as much as possible the person who is to go into the nursing home, to get a sense of their wishes. If this person is not able to communicate their wishes, you can try to guess what they would be—based on their personality, medical condition and preferences expressed in the past.

## **Recommendations and Advice**

You can also talk to people you trust and who understand the needs and desires of the person who is to go into the nursing home. These may include family and friends, and professionals such as doctors, social workers, hospital discharge planners, dietitians and geriatric care managers.

## **Compare**

In addition to the opinions of friends, family and health care professionals, you will also probably want more objective standards for comparing the quality of particular nursing homes. In this case, you might be able to turn

to a Long-Term Care Ombudsman program in your area. Although they won't recommend one nursing home over another, ombudsman programs regularly visit nursing homes, and they generally can describe the strengths and weakness of the homes in your area. They can also give information from the most recent state inspection and about a home's history of complaints or problems. Contact your local office on aging for the phone number of an ombudsman program. Some areas have local directories for resources pertaining to aging.

Another place to get information is the Nursing Home Compare database on the Medicare website, [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov). With this database, you can find information about all Medicare and Medicaid certified nursing homes in the United States, including the results from nursing home inspections. You can search geographically for nursing homes in your area, and you can set up an easy-to-read, side-by-side chart that compares nursing homes according to specific criteria.