

# Important Selection Factors

After you have narrowed your list to several possible nursing homes, you'll want to contact each of them and evaluate them according to selection factors that you and the resident-to-be deem important. There are general selection factors, and there are factors that are based on the specific needs of the person who will be living there. Make your own list, and when talking with the nursing home representatives on the phone, you can go through it and make notes about each particular home. Here are some general selection factors:

## Location

- ✓ Where is the home located? Is it near to family and friends? Near a hospital? A conveniently located nursing home will make all the difference both to the resident and to his or her family members and friends. Visits will be more frequent, and it will be easier for people to stop by and check out how things are going on a regular basis.

## Openings

- ✓ Make sure to ask about availability. Ask how many beds are available. If there are none, ask to get on a waiting list, and also ask how long it might be before a bed becomes available.

## Staff

- ✓ The staff, including personal care workers, nurses and others, are the people who the resident will see everyday and can make the difference between a bad nursing home experience and a good one. The staff should be friendly, well trained and subject to background checks. Ask whether the nursing home screens potential employees for a history of abuse or criminal behavior. Ask also whether and how the nursing home trains its employees. Are they taught how to deal with aggressive, difficult residents? Are they trained to recognize resident abuse or neglect? What are the procedures for making complaints about staff members? What is the patient-staff ratio?

## Accepts Medicare or Medicaid?

- ✓ If the resident will depend on Medicare or Medicaid to pay for their stay in the nursing home, you'll want to find out whether the facility accepts Medicare or Medicaid as payment. Also find out if there are a limited number of beds reserved for Medicare and Medicaid residents, and the availability of these beds.

## Fees: Basic and Special Services

- ✓ Generally, nursing homes charge a flat fee for basic services—such as room, board, housekeeping, and recreation—and additional fees for special services—such as manicures, telephones, haircuts, and transportation. Get a copy of each home's fee schedule so that you know what to expect and can compare different facilities.

## Special Medical Conditions

- ✓ Make sure to ask whether the facility is equipped to deal with any special conditions that the resident has, such as dementia or Alzheimer's disease.

## Other Preferences

- ✓ Some nursing homes are devoted to serving people of specific religious and cultural backgrounds, and some are more diverse. Some can cater to particular language needs. If the potential resident has specific preferences, make sure that you ask what each facility has to offer. Find out the philosophical and ethical perspectives of each long-term care facility. Ask to see the results of surveys and treatments to gauge their appropriateness.