The Working Daughter Guide To Choose a Nursing Home For Your Elderly Parent

So you think it's time your aging parent or relative move to a nursing home. It can be an emotional decision but sometimes it's the most compassionate decision you can make; your family member deserves to be well cared for and safe.

Choosing the right facility takes thought and planning – but you don't always have the luxury of time. Know that there is no perfect solution nor is there only one right decision. Quality of care is a major factor, but so too is availability, and, quite frankly, affordability. Your job as a caregiver is to make the best possible decision based on your individual circumstances.

Here's our guide on what to consider when choosing the best nursing home option for you family member.

Referrals/Research

- ✓ Ask around for referrals. Your parent's primary care physician, friends and relatives, staff at assisted living or a hospital, your local Council on Aging, are all possible sources of information.
- ✓ Use the Nursing Home Compare tool from Medicare.gov to find facilities near you and compare their safety and quality records

Availability and Cost

- ✓ If you can, start looking before you think you need to. Many facilities have long wait lists.
- ✓ Does the facility accept Medicaid as well as private pay? Is there a different wait list depending on your method of payment? Do they require several months of private pay before accepting Medicaid?

Proximity

- ✓ Is the facility close to you and other family members and friends? Familiar faces and frequent visits can ease your family member's transition to a new home. Can other family members easily get there so that they can visit too and give you a break when you need it?
- ✓ Speaking of visiting, are there set visiting hours or can you drop by any time?

Tours

- ✓ Visit the facilities you're considering and note what you see, and smell. Are residents sitting in wheelchairs in the halls or facing the walls? Are residents dressed or in johnnys? Is there a strong urine odor or strong chemical odor that may be masking other smells?
- ✓ Is the facility safe? Is there a receptionist watching the front door? Are side doors unlocked?
- ✓ Does the staff seem energetic or lethargic? Do they make eye contact and interact with residents and family members?
- ✓ Sit outside during a shift change and observe employees as they show up for work. Are they dragging or do they have some pep in their step?

Quality of Life

- ✓ Can patients follow their own schedules or must they comply with routines?
- ✓ Will staff members be assigned to your parent or will they have many different aides caring for them?
- ✓ What activities are offered?
- ✓ Can you take your parent out of the facility for holidays and excursions?
- ✓ Do they offer services like haircuts, dental appointments, podiatry, and flu shots?
- ✓ Can your parent keep their doctor or will they see a facility-appointed doctor?
- ✓ Under what circumstances will the staff send your relative to the ER?
- ✓ How do they balance risk of falling with independence and autonomy?
- ✓ How are confusion, wandering and behavior issues handled?
- ✓ What is the philosophy on psych drugs and restraining patients?
- ✓ What does your gut tell you?

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