

Looking for the Most Appropriate Facility

Choosing the most appropriate facility is a very important personal decision. The best way to select a facility is to visit it and assess whether or not the potential resident would be happy and best serviced by a placement there. There are, however, some key areas to look at in the facilities to be visited.

Where is the facility located?

- Is it near family and/or friends?
- Is it near the potential resident's choice of doctors and hospital?

What is the physical building like?

- Is it well lighted?
- Are there handrails in the hallways?
- Are there grab rails in the bathrooms?
- Are the exits clearly marked?
- Is the facility secure? How are unauthorized walks both inside and outside the building handled?
- Does the facility appear to be well maintained?

Is the resident given a bedroom or an apartment?

- Is there a nurse call near each bed?
- Is there easy access to each bed?
- Does each resident have ample closet and drawer space?
- What personal possessions and household furniture are the residents allowed to bring into the facility?
- Are there private rooms? If not, is there a divider drape for privacy?
- Is there room enough for a resident to maneuver a wheelchair easily?
- Is the lavatory conveniently located? Does it have a nurse call bell?
- If a resident goes on an extended vacation or is hospitalized what are the established rules regarding the reservation of their bed/room?
- Is the facility generally clean and lacking unpleasant odors?

Are meals provided?

- Does a dietician approve resident meal plans? Are special diets accommodated?
- Are they served in an attractive manner?
- Is the menu posted? Does the meal being served match the one on the menu? (Mealtime is an excellent time to visit a facility).
- Are snacks or meals available at times other than scheduled mealtimes?
- Are residents who need assistance receiving it?
- Is there a resident dining room? Is it comfortable looking and spacious enough?

What services are available to the resident?

- How often is each resident's individual service plan reviewed?
- Will the resident's physician visit that facility? If not, who are the physicians who do visit that facility?
- Is there a social worker available?
- Is there sufficient staff?
- Are there sufficient and appropriate activities for the residents?
- Are there barber and beautician services available?
- Are provisions made for religious observances?



- Are there banking services?
- Are bed linen and towels provided?
- Are there laundry services?
- Are there housekeeping services?
- Are exercise facilities available to residents?
- How would the resident receive personal telephone calls?
- Is transportation provided to medical and social appointments?

What is the general atmosphere of the facility?

- Are residents treated with respect and dignity?
- Are staff persons courteous?
- Do staff persons know residents by name?
- Do residents appear active, involved (except those who are very ill), and comfortable?
- How many staff members are scheduled for each shift?
- What are the facility's established emergency procedures?
- What are the visiting hours?

Some general information

- What is the base level of self-care that a resident must be able to perform?
- What are the admission requirements?
- Does the facility have a current, valid license?
- Does the facility provide special services, like therapy, if needed?
- Are pets allowed?
- Can a resident bring his or her own car?
- Does the facility participate in the Medicare and/or MassHealth program(s)?
- What types of situations might require the resident to vacate the facility?
- Are there specialized units within the facility?

What financial costs are affiliated with the facility?

- What are the facility's monthly costs, billing and payment policies?
- What services are included in the monthly cost and what services must be paid for separately?
- What are the annual rate increases that have occurred the last couple of years?
- Is a deposit required and is it refundable?
- What happens if the resident is no longer able to pay for the noted services?

Assessing Quality of Care

The Department of Public Health (DPH) inspects Massachusetts nursing facilities and hospital-based transitional care units every 9-15 months. State inspectors ensure that each facility is meeting the established state and federal quality standards. Some of the items that they address are: overall cleanliness, adequate staffing, food preparation and medication management. Upon request these facilities must make copies of their most recent survey available to the public.

The DPH created a survey performance tool that they use to evaluate every Medicare and MassHealth certified nursing facility in Massachusetts. These report cards address 44 of the most critical federal quality standards regarding the following topics for each facility: management, nursing, resident rights, meal service, and environment. They also make an overall statement regarding each facility's performance as compared to all other facilities in the

state. You may request to review any facility's most recent annual Massachusetts State Department of Public Health (DPH) evaluation (report card).

You may also find this information at:

Massachusetts Department of Public Health

800-493-8333

Division of Health Care Quality

617-753-8104

www.state.ma.us/dph/qtool/qthome.htm