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This information is not intended as a substitute for specific legal advice.

Tips for Choosing a Nursing Home or Assisted Living Facility

Tips for Choosing

- Look at the number of staff and their qualifications. Do they seem comfortable and competent in dealing with the residents? Is there enough staff to meet the needs of the residents?
 - Look to multiple sources for information. Review the facility's most recent survey (available at the facility or from Licensing and Certification board or online at nmhealth.org (1-800-752-8649). Discuss citations that concern you with the management. For nursing homes, you can also research the government's "Nursing Home Compare" website, www.medicare.gov/nursinghomecompare/
 - Talk with the residents of the home—are they pleased with the care and do they feel this is their home?
 - Look for an active resident council. This is a group of residents who make suggestions for improving the operation of the home. Ask to speak to the president and or resident council members.
 - Look further than "neat and clean." Use your five senses and your common sense in evaluating the facility. Listen for caring conversations between the staff and the residents. If you do not hear this interaction, look for another facility.
 - Visit the facility frequently, including evening and weekend hours. The care may be different on Saturday at 8:00 pm, compared with Tuesday at 9:00 am. Remember, you or your family member will live there 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Search for a home that provides the services and environment you seek on a continual basis.
- Look for meaningful, adult appropriate activities and a creative and interesting activity program.
 - Pay attention to your intuition or feeling about the facility. Find a facility where you or your family member feels most comfortable and can maintain the highest practicable quality of life.
 - Contact the local Long Term Care Ombudsman for information about the facility. The Ombudsman visits regularly and advocates for the residents. The Ombudsman may be a valuable source of information about a facility. Contact the Ombudsman Program at:
 - 1-866-842-9230** Albuquerque and Northwestern N.M.
 - 1-866-451-2901** Santa Fe and Northeastern N.M.
 - 1-800-762-8690** Southeast and Southwest N.M.
 - Evaluate carefully the activities program. Some smaller assisted living facilities may offer little more than television. Will you or your loved one live a full and satisfying life?
 - Explore the services the facility offers. Can they meet the needs of you or your loved one? If the resident has a progressive disease, will the facility require her to move if her condition worsens?
 - Obtain a full description of the fees for service. Are all services included in a set fee, or are there additional charges as services are added?
 - Obtain a copy of the contract and review it carefully. Be sure you understand all terms of the contract. You may wish to have the contract reviewed by an attorney.