

- Is this particular facility the “right fit” for my loved one? Is general, low maintenance care all that is required or is more intense, special-needs care necessary? If dementia/Alzheimer’s is involved, does the facility provide the needed provisions? Does this facility house other residents similar to my love one?
- When I walk through the entry how does the facility smell? Without cleanliness there is not a healthy environment. I make it a point to walk into the kitchen/pantry area and to visit the restrooms. After all, this is going to be your loved-one’s home. By the way, does this seem like a home that might fit my loved-one’s personality?
- What is the Care Giver-to-Resident ratio (not to include administrative and kitchen staff)? This is of most importance if any personal or medical care is required. Of course the smaller the ratio the better. Many times the ratio could be as many as one caregiver to fifteen residents or more. If this is the case how much personal time could be given to your loved one throughout the day?
- What is the rate of turn-over for Care Givers in the facility? You want the Care Givers to be able to establish a good relationship with your loved one. Consistency is very important. When my close relative was in a care facility, those who cared for her each day could walk into her room and notice if something was not normal because they saw her on a consistent basis. They established a rapport with her to the point she felt genuine trust and affection. She looked forward to their visits because they took time to talk to her and get to know her. At times, she felt more at ease telling the staff her issues rather than talking to me. Nothing feels more comforting than familiarity.
- Will the facility accommodate my loved-one’s time schedule or is my loved-one required to adhere to theirs? Many seniors like to sleep in each morning. Why should it be necessary for them to be awakened at 6:00 am for a shower if they would like to sleep until 9:00?
- How does the food taste and how is it presented? Not the food that is scheduled for potential clients but what are the residents who live there being served on a day to day basis. Is there variety? Do residents have menu choices and are menus presented on a regular basis. Will meals be prepared based on your loved ones dietary needs? Will the facility accommodate special requests such as a milk shake mid-afternoon or a pudding cup before bed? Are family members welcomed to drop in for meals with their loved ones? If so, what is the cost?
- Will my loved-one be allowed to age in place? As time passes and more care is necessary, some facilities require the resident move to another type of facility while others allow the resident to remain; thus receiving the additional care needed. This is an important consideration as many seniors do not adjust well to change.
- When considering contractual arrangements it never hurts to attempt negotiation. It doesn’t hurt to ask. Find out exactly what the basic rate covers. Also remember to ask if there will be additional fees for items or services and what are your options?
- Do the bedrooms and bathrooms have emergency call systems? Do the residents wear monitors?

- Are there specific visiting hours? Most of us have busy schedules and may need to (and should) visit at erratic times or even stay the night on occasion. What system is in place to monitor facility entrances and exits?
- What planned activities are available (such as ice cream socials, happy hours, worship services, sing-alongs, bingo, outings, guest speakers, etc.)? Are there areas residents can visit at their leisure (reading, playing cards or play a game, etc.)? Is there outdoor space? Is transportation provided for personal needs as well as group outings? Are barbers and hairstylists available on-site by appointment?
- May residents bring their pets with them? Many residents view their dog or cat as important family members. Having their “best friend” beside them could make could provide a smoother transition, providing a more home-like environment. If unable to care for the pet, would facility staff members provide that service?
- Are residents allowed to paint and redecorate their personal spaces? It is very important to some residents that their new home resemble their prior home. Personalized touches such as paint colors, favorite personal furnishings, family photos, mementoes, etc. can enhance a space and give it more of a “homey”, warm, and inviting feeling. In certain cases it might be wise to bring in a professional decorator who specializes in helping seniors transition into their new living spaces.