

Family Care Facility Selection Checklist

Your Complete Guide to Choosing Safe,
Quality Care

Covering All Facility Types:

- ✓ **RCFE** (Residential Care Facility for the Elderly)
- ✓ **ARF** (Adult Residential Facility)
- ✓ **Group Homes**
- ✓ **STRTP** (Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Program)

Presented by
USACAREFIND.COM

Dear Family Member,

Choosing a care facility for someone you love is one of the most important decisions you will ever make. It can feel overwhelming, emotional, and complex. We know, because we have been there.

You want to ensure your loved one is safe, respected, and cared for with dignity. You worry about making the wrong choice. That fear is natural—it shows how much you care.

We created this guide to empower you. By using this checklist, you are taking control of the process. You are moving from "hoping for the best" to "verifying the best."

This guide will help you look past the fresh paint and nice furniture to see what really matters: licensing, staff training, safety protocols, and the quality of care.

Trust your instincts. Ask the hard questions. Take your time.

You are your loved one's strongest advocate, and with this guide in hand, you are prepared.

With support,

The Team at USACAREFIND.COM

How to Use This Guide

This checklist is designed to be your companion during your search. We recommend printing a separate copy for each facility you visit.

Key Objectives

1. **Verify Legitimacy:** Ensure the facility is licensed and in good standing.
2. **Check Qualifications:** Confirm staff are trained and background checked.
3. **Observe Reality:** See beyond the marketing tour.
4. **Ask Questions:** Get direct answers to critical concerns.
5. **Compare Options:** Use the scorecard to make an objective decision.

Your 3-Step Process

1. **Pre-Visit Research:** Complete the "Licensing & Certifications" section before you even leave your house using online state resources.
2. **The Tour:** Bring this guide with you. Take notes. Check boxes as you walk through. Don't be afraid to pull it out and write while you talk.
3. **Post-Visit Review:** Sit down within 24 hours of your visit to review your notes, fill out the red flags section, and verify any outstanding questions.

Licensing & Certifications (Part 1)

Complete this section before or during your initial meeting.

Why This Matters: A license ensures the facility meets state standards for safety and care. Never place a loved one in an unlicensed facility.

☐ **Verify State License Status**

Ask to see the physical license. Is it posted visibly? Is the status "Active"?

☐ **Check License Capacity**

Does the number of residents match the licensed capacity?

☐ **Review Inspection Reports**

Ask for the most recent state inspection report. Are there citations?

☐ **Administrator Certificate**

Is the Administrator's certificate current and active?

☐ **Business License**

Does the facility have a valid local business license?

Licensing & Certifications (Part 2)

☐ **Liability Insurance**


Does the facility carry adequate liability insurance?

☐ **Bonding**

Is the facility bonded to protect resident funds and property?

☐ **Specialty Certifications**

If your loved one has dementia or special needs, does the license explicitly cover these services?

 **Pro Tip:** You can verify license numbers independently on your state's Department of Social Services website. See Page 16 for resources.

Notes on Licensing:

Staff Qualifications (Part 1)

The quality of care depends entirely on the people providing it.



You Have the Right: You are entitled to ask about staff training. Good facilities are proud of their team's qualifications.

☐ **Background Checks**

Have all staff members cleared Department of Justice (DOJ) / FBI background checks?

☐ **First Aid & CPR**

Is there always at least one staff member on duty with current First Aid/CPR certification?

☐ **Initial Training**

Do new staff complete mandatory training hours prior to working with residents?

☐ **Ongoing Education (CEUs)**

Does the facility require annual Continuing Education Units for staff?

☐ **Dementia Care Training**

If applicable, do staff receive specific training for dementia/Alzheimer's care?

Staff Qualifications (Part 2)

☐ **Medication Management**


Are staff trained and authorized to assist with medication administration?

☐ **Staff-to-Resident Ratio**

Is the ratio sufficient for your loved one's needs (Day vs. Night)?

☐ **Communication Skills**

Can staff communicate effectively with your loved one in their primary language?

 **Pro Tip:** Ask a direct care staff member: "How long have you worked here?" High turnover is a red flag.

Notes on Staffing:

Safety & Compliance (Part 1)

Inspect the physical environment carefully.

Physical Safety

☐ **Cleanliness & Odor**

Is the facility clean? Is it free of strong urine or chemical odors?

☐ **Accessibility**

Are hallways clear? Are grab bars installed in bathrooms and hallways?

☐ **Secure Exits**

Are doors alarmed or secured (especially for memory care)?

☐ **Lighting**

Is the facility well-lit in common areas and hallways?

☐ **Temperature Control**

Is the temperature comfortable? Is there adequate heating and cooling?

Safety & Compliance (Part 2)

Emergency Preparedness

☐ **Emergency Plan**

Is there a posted emergency disaster plan?

☐ **Fire Safety**

Are smoke detectors and fire extinguishers visible and inspected?

☐ **Call System**

Is there a functioning call system in bedrooms and bathrooms?

Verify: Ask to see where they keep their 3-day supply of emergency food and water. It is a state requirement.

Notes on Safety:

Tour Observation Guide (Part 1)

Use your senses to evaluate the environment.

☐ **Resident Appearance**

Do residents look clean, groomed, and dressed appropriately?

☐ **Staff Interaction**

Do staff speak to residents with respect? Do they smile and make eye contact?

☐ **Engagement**


Are residents engaged in activities, or are they just sitting in front of a TV?

☐ **Meal Quality**

Does the food look and smell appetizing? Are menus posted?

☐ **Privacy**

Do residents have privacy in their rooms and bathrooms?

 **SMELL TEST:** A strong scent of air freshener often masks poor hygiene. It should smell neutral and clean.

Tour Observation Guide (Part 2)

☐ **Outdoor Access**


Is there a safe, accessible outdoor area for residents to sit?

☐ **Personalization**

Are residents allowed to bring their own furniture and decor?

☐ **Responsiveness**

If a call light or alarm goes off, how quickly does staff respond?

 **LISTEN:** Is the facility noisy and chaotic, or calm and peaceful? Can you hear staff talking kindly to residents?

General Impressions:

Critical Questions to Ask

 **Ask the Administrator directly:**

1. What is included in the base monthly fee, and what costs extra?

2. What happens if my loved one's care needs increase? (Eviction policy)

3. What is your policy on visitation? Can family visit anytime?

4. How do you handle medical emergencies?

5. What is the ratio of staff to residents at night?

6. Can you provide references from current families?

Facility Type: RCFE

Residential Care Facility for the Elderly

Best For: Adults aged 60+ who require assistance with daily living (bathing, dressing, meds) but do not need 24-hour skilled nursing.

Specific Requirements to Check:


- Does the license specifically state "Elderly"?
- If Memory Care is needed, is there a "Dementia Plan of Operation" approved by the state?
- Is there a Pre-Admission Appraisal to ensure needs can be met?

☐ Hospice Waiver

Does the facility have a waiver to allow hospice care if needed later?

☐ Bedridden Waiver

Does the facility have clearance for bedridden residents?

 **Pro Tip:** RCFEs are "social model" care, not "medical model." They focus on quality of life and daily support.

Facility Type: ARF

Adult Residential Facility

Best For: Adults (ages 18-59) with developmental disabilities, mental health needs, or physical disabilities who require care and supervision.

Specific Requirements to Check:

- Is the Program Design specific to your loved one's needs?
- Are staff trained in behavioral support if needed?
- Is the facility vendorized with the Regional Center?

☐ Behavioral Plan

Does the facility have experience with your loved one's specific behaviors?

☐ Community Integration

Does the program include outings and community activities?

Key Verification: Ensure the Administrator has the specific ARF certification, which differs from RCFE certification.

Group Homes & STRTPs

Group Homes (GH)

Best For: Children under 18 with significant emotional or developmental needs.

- ☐ **Needs & Services Plan:** Is there a clear plan for the child's specific goals?
 - ☐ **Staff Supervision:** Is there adequate overnight awake staff?
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ST RTP

Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Program

Best For: Youth requiring intensive therapeutic support and mental health services.

- ☐ **Accreditation:** Is the facility accredited (e.g., CARF, COA)?
 - ☐ **Mental Health Services:** Is there a contract for specialty mental health services?
 - ☐ **Trauma-Informed Care:** Are staff trained in trauma-informed practices?
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State Verification Resources

Verify facility licenses directly with these state agencies.

State	Agency / Search Term
California	Dept of Social Services (CCLD) cclد.dss.ca.gov
Florida	Agency for Health Care Admin ahca.myflorida.com
Texas	Health & Human Services hhs.texas.gov
Arizona	Dept of Health Services azdhs.gov
New York	Dept of Health health.ny.gov
Washington	Dept of Social & Health Services dshs.wa.gov
Oregon	Dept of Human Services oregon.gov/dhs
Nevada	Bureau of Health Care Quality dpbh.nv.gov
Ohio	Dept of Health odh.ohio.gov

Red Flags & Warnings

If you see these, proceed with extreme caution or leave.



Strong odors of urine or heavy air freshener.



Staff ignoring residents or treating them like children.



Unanswered call lights or cries for help.



Administrator is unavailable or avoids questions.



No license posted or license is expired.

Comparison Worksheet

Metric	Facility A	Facility B
Licensing		
Staffing		
Cleanliness		
TOTAL		

You Are Ready.

You have the knowledge.

You have the tools.

You know what to look for.

Trust yourself. You've got this. 💙

Still have questions?

Visit us online for more resources, verification tools, and support.

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