

The Virginia Nursing Home Survival Guide

NURSING HOME EVALUATION

As you visit nursing homes, use the following form for each place you visit. Don't expect every nursing home to score well on every question. The presence or absence of any of these items does not automatically mean a facility is good or bad. Each has its own strengths and weaknesses. Simply consider what is most important to the resident and you.

Record your observations for each question by circling a number from one to five. If a question is unimportant to you or doesn't apply to your loved one, leave the evaluation area for that question blank. Then total all numbers circled for each facility.

Your ratings will help you compare nursing homes and choose the best one for your situation. The facilities with the highest scores are those on which you should focus your final attention. However, you shouldn't rely solely on the numbers. Ask to speak to family members of other residents. Also, contact the local or state ombudsman for information about the nursing home and get a copy of the facility's state inspection report from the nursing home, the agency that licenses nursing homes, or the ombudsman.

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NURSING HOME EVALUATION TOOL

Name of Nursing Home: _____

Date Visited: _____

RATING SCALE				
Unacceptable	Acceptable	Average	Above Average	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

THE BUILDING AND ITS SURROUNDINGS:

What is your first impression of the facility?	1 2 3 4 5
What is the condition of the facility's exterior paint, gutters and trim?	1 2 3 4 5
Are the grounds pleasant and well-kept?	1 2 3 4 5
Do you like the view from residents' rooms and other windows?	1 2 3 4 5
Are there appropriate areas for physical therapy and occupational therapy?	1 2 3 4 5
Do chairs and other furniture seem sturdy and difficult to tip? Are they attractive and comfortable?	1 2 3 4 5
Do patient beds in double rooms have privacy curtains?	1 2 3 4 5
Are those curtains being used by staff to protect the privacy of patients receiving treatments or assistance?	1 2 3 4 5

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Is an on-site barber or beauty salon available?	1 2 3 4 5
Is an on-site library available?	1 2 3 4 5
Is an on-site computer center with high speed internet access available?	1 2 3 4 5
Is an on-site gift shop available?	1 2 3 4 5
Is an on-site general store available?	1 2 3 4 5
Do meals appear appetizing and are they served promptly at the proper times?	1 2 3 4 5
Do residents who need help eating receive adequate assistance?	1 2 3 4 5
Is the dining area clean and pleasant?	1 2 3 4 5
Is there room at and between tables for both residents and aides for those who need assistance with meals?	1 2 3 4 5
What is the level and enthusiasm of resident participation in the activities?	1 2 3 4 5
Is there a well-ventilated indoor room for smokers?	1 2 3 4 5
Is there a covered / enclosed outdoor shelter for smokers?	1 2 3 4 5
Are non-smoking rules enforced, both indoors and outdoors, in all non-smoking areas?	1 2 3 4 5
What is your impression of general cleanliness throughout the facility?	1 2 3 4 5

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What is your impression of the general cleanliness and grooming of residents?	1 2 3 4 5
Does the facility smell clean?	1 2 3 4 5
Is there enough space in resident rooms and common areas for the number of residents?	1 2 3 4 5
How noisy are hallways and common areas?	1 2 3 4 5
Are common areas such as lounges and activity rooms provided?	1 2 3 4 5
Are residents allowed to bring furniture and other personal items to decorate their rooms?	1 2 3 4 5
Do residents with Alzheimer's disease live in a separate Alzheimer's unit?	1 2 3 4 5
Does the facility provide a secure outdoor area?	1 2 3 4 5
Is there a secure area where a resident with Alzheimer's can safely wander on paths?	1 2 3 4 5

THE STAFF, POLICIES AND PRACTICES:

Does the administrator know residents by name and speak to them in a pleasant, friendly way?	1 2 3 4 5
Do staff and residents communicate with cheerful, respectful attitudes?	1 2 3 4 5
Do staff and administration seem to work well with each other in a spirit of cooperation?	1 2 3 4 5

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Do residents get permanent assignment of staff?	1 2 3 4 5
Do nursing assistants participate in the resident's care planning process?	1 2 3 4 5
How good is the facility's record for employee retention?	1 2 3 4 5
Does a state ombudsman visit the facility on a regular basis?	1 2 3 4 5
How likely is an increase in private pay rates?	1 2 3 4 5
Are there any additional charges not included in the daily or monthly rate?	1 2 3 4 5

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE STAFF:

Are beds available?	1 2 3 4 5
What method is used in matching roommates?	1 2 3 4 5
What is a typical day like?	1 2 3 4 5
Can residents choose what time to go to bed and wake up?	1 2 3 4 5
Are meaningful activities available that are appropriate for residents?	1 2 3 4 5
Is there an activities schedule posted? Are residents engaged in activities?	1 2 3 4 5
Can residents continue to participate in interests like gardening or contact with pets?	1 2 3 4 5

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Does the facility provide transportation for religious services and other activities?	1 2 3 4 5
Is a van or bus with wheelchair access available?	1 2 3 4 5
How are decisions about method and frequency of bathing made?	1 2 3 4 5
How do residents get their clothes laundered?	1 2 3 4 5
What happens when clothing or other items are missing?	1 2 3 4 5
Does the facility have a current license from the state?	1 2 3 4 5
Does the administrator have a current license from the state?	1 2 3 4 5
If Medicare and/or Medicaid coverage is needed, is the facility certified?	1 2 3 4 5
Does the facility have a formal quality assurance program?	1 2 3 4 5
Does the facility have an operating agreement with a nearby hospital for emergencies?	1 2 3 4 5
Is a physician available in an emergency?	1 2 3 4 5
Are personal physicians allowed?	1 2 3 4 5
How is regular medical attention assured?	1 2 3 4 5
How are patients and families involved in treatment plans?	1 2 3 4 5

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Are specialty medical services available (e.g., dentists, podiatrists, optometrists)?	1 2 3 4 5
Does the facility report to the patient's personal physician on progress? To families?	1 2 3 4 5
What services are provided for terminally ill patients and their families?	1 2 3 4 5
Is a licensed nurse always available?	1 2 3 4 5
Does a pharmacist review patient drug regimens?	1 2 3 4 5
Are arrangement made for patients to worship or attend religious services?	1 2 3 4 5
Is physical therapy available under the direction of a licensed physical therapist?	1 2 3 4 5
Are services of an occupational therapist or speech pathologist available?	1 2 3 4 5
How are residents encouraged to participate in activities?	1 2 3 4 5
How are patient activity preferences respected?	1 2 3 4 5
Are both group and individual activities available?	1 2 3 4 5
Is a social worker available to assist residents and families?	1 2 3 4 5
Does a dietician plan menus for patients on special diets?	1 2 3 4 5

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Are personal likes and dislikes taken into consideration in menu planning?	1 2 3 4 5
Are snacks available between meals?	1 2 3 4 5
Are the number of meals / snacks provided adequate?	1 2 3 4 5
Is the food preparation area separate from the dishwashing and garbage areas?	1 2 3 4 5
Is food which needs refrigeration put away promptly, and not left standing on counters?	1 2 3 4 5
Is there fresh water on bedside stands?	1 2 3 4 5
Are there hand rails in hallways and grab bars in bathrooms?	1 2 3 4 5
Are toilets convenient to bedrooms?	1 2 3 4 5
Is there a sink in each bathroom?	1 2 3 4 5
Are call bells near each toilet?	1 2 3 4 5
Are the hallways wide enough to accommodate passing wheelchairs?	1 2 3 4 5
Are the rooms large enough to allow a wheelchair to maneuver easily?	1 2 3 4 5
Is the temperature comfortable (remember many seniors prefer warmer environments)?	1 2 3 4 5
Does every patient room have a window?	1 2 3 4 5
Do all residents have closets and drawers for clothing?	1 2 3 4 5

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Is the atmosphere generally friendly and welcoming?	1 2 3 4 5
If residents call out for help or use a call light, do they get prompt, appropriate responses?	1 2 3 4 5
Does each resident have the same nursing assistant(s) most of the time?	1 2 3 4 5
How does a resident with problems voice a complaint?	1 2 3 4 5
How are disputes, problems, or complaints with the quality of care resolved?	1 2 3 4 5
Are residents who are able to permitted to participate in care plan meetings?	1 2 3 4 5
Does the facility have an effective resident council?	1 2 3 4 5
Is an effective family council in place?	1 2 3 4 5
Can family/staff meetings be scheduled to discuss and work out any problems that may arise?	1 2 3 4 5

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF:

Do I feel comfortable coming here/leaving my loved one here?	1 2 3 4 5
How convenient is the facility's location to me and other family members who may want to visit the resident?	1 2 3 4 5

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Are there areas other than the resident's room where family members can visit?	1 2 3 4 5
Does the facility have safe, well-lighted, convenient parking?	1 2 3 4 5
Are hotels/motels nearby for out-of-town family members?	1 2 3 4 5
Are there restaurants nearby suitable for taking the resident out for a meals with family members?	1 2 3 4 5
How convenient will care planning conferences be for interested family members?	1 2 3 4 5
Is the facility convenient for the patient's personal physician?	1 2 3 4 5

Total Score: _____