

Making the Right Choice:

Choosing a Residential Facility



**Board on Aging and Long Term Care
Ombudsman Program**

*Advocates for the Long Term Care
Consumer 60 years of age or older*

**MAKING
THE CHOICE
THAT IS RIGHT
FOR YOU OR
YOUR FAMILY
MEMBER**

BE PREPARED.

Your Long Term Care Ombudsman or your Aging and Disability Resource Center can help you understand the different types of facilities available, and the different funding requirements and options for paying for care. After having decided which type of “home” would best suit your needs, you should make arrangements to visit the choices in your area. You may want to ask that any available written information such as price lists, mission statements, available services and admission agreements be sent to you ahead of time to help you prepare your questions and have time to read the “fine print.” Before or during your visit you might review inspection reports (or surveys), which can be found online or prominently posted in the home. Take time to write down the top two or three services or issues that are most important to you as you make this choice.

VISIT THE HOMES THAT YOU HAVE IDENTIFIED AS YOUR CHOICES AND ASK QUESTIONS.

The following questions to ask and things to consider may help you identify whether a home and the services it provides can meet the needs and preferences of you or your loved one. This checklist is designed to provide a comparison between two homes but you should visit as many homes as you think will help you make the best choice. A Long Term Care Ombudsman can help answer any other questions you might have about regulations or licensing, or to clarify things you may have seen or heard during your tours.

During your tour ask questions about the home and how its care is organized; ask about its reputation in the community and what the people that live there say about the care provided. Notice whether the person who gives you the tour asks about the needs and preferences of you or your loved one. Ask yourself if you are satisfied with her or his answers. Finally, think about making a second, unscheduled visit, on a different day, possibly during a meal or social program. This will help you to see for yourself how well the home organizes these important times of the day, allowing you to observe how skilled and welcoming the staff are, and most importantly, how content the people who live there seem to be.

AS YOU MAKE YOUR DECISION.

Compare your notes and decide whether the homes that you visited can fulfill those top two or three priorities that you identified. Be sure you know whether the home can provide the services that you or your loved one may require, and that any questions about how care and services are paid for have been answered. Finally, you should take the time to carefully and completely read all of the documents that you or your loved one will be asked to sign when moving in. You may also want to ask an attorney or another trusted person to review these documents with you.

USE YOUR VOICE.

If you or your loved one have questions at any time about the care and services provided, or if you feel dissatisfied with the conditions in the home, please call your Long Term Care Ombudsman. The Ombudsman is there to assist you in getting the care that you need and expect, and works to educate staff, residents/tenants and family members about long term care systems.

**You can reach your
Ombudsman by
calling 1-800-815-0015
or online at
longtermcare.wi.gov**

CHOOSING "HOME:"

A Checklist of Questions to Ask & Things to Consider

Home Number One	
Home Name	
Address	
Phone Number	
Contact Name	
Contact Phone Number	
Appointment Date	
Appointment Time	

Home Number Two	
Home Name	
Address	
Phone Number	
Contact Name	
Contact Phone Number	
Appointment Date	
Appointment Time	

Items or Services Most Important to Me or to my Loved One
1.
2.
3.

Resident/Tenant Rights

Most homes welcome families and other visitors into the home and should be receptive to issues being brought to their attention. Programs like the Long Term Care Ombudsman provide advocacy services to long term care consumers and work with homes to improve care and solve problems through careful planning and with input from groups like resident/tenant and family councils.

QUESTIONS TO ASK	Home #1		Home #2	
Did the home provide a written copy of and explain resident/tenant rights and any house rules? Are these acceptable to you or your family member?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Does the home have visiting hours or other restrictions on visitors?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Does the home provide any orientation and ongoing support to residents or tenants and their families?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Is there a resident or tenant council?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Is there a family council?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Were you shown a bulletin board or other place where resources and other important information were displayed?	YES	NO	YES	NO
THINGS TO CONSIDER	Home #1		Home #2	
Did you discuss advance directives during your tour?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Does the home have a social worker or case manager available on staff?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Did the home provide any written statement of rules or conditions under which a person could be asked to leave?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Do you feel confident that your comments, suggestions or complaints would be listened to and resolved?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Does the home involve the resident/tenant and others as desired in care planning sessions? How often do they occur?	YES	NO	YES	NO

NOTES:

PERSONAL CARE and SUPPORTIVE SERVICES

Care and assistance provided should reflect the person's needs, preferences, habits and lifestyle, and should be provided with dignity and respect.

QUESTIONS TO ASK	Home #1		Home #2	
Is help provided with eating, bathing/grooming, toileting/hygiene, dressing, mobility/ambulation, etc. as needed?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Is help provided with laundry, housekeeping, meal preparation, shopping, transportation, financial management, etc. as needed?	YES	NO	YES	NO
THINGS TO CONSIDER	Home #1		Home #2	
If you or the person who will live here has special language or other communication needs, how will this be accommodated? Are there people on staff around the clock that speak your language, or are there interpreter services available? Will you be charged for the use of an interpreter or any special communications equipment?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Do you feel comfortable that the home can meet your family member's needs and preferences with dignity and respect?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Are you satisfied with the home's responses to your questions?	YES	NO	YES	NO

NOTES:

MEDICAL SERVICES

Homes should either provide or assist with medication management, arranging and assisting with transportation to medical appointments, managing medical conditions, and responding to emergencies. Nursing homes can be expected to provide a higher degree of skilled nursing service than assisted living facilities.

QUESTIONS TO ASK	Home #1		Home #2	
Is there a nurse available? How often?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Does the home manage the person's medications and treatments?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Can the person choose his/her own doctor, pharmacy?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Does the home provide or arrange for any specialized treatment or therapies if needed?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Can the home care for persons with weight challenges?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Is there a charge for transportation to appointments or for staff to accompany to appointments?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Does the home contract for hospice services or permit you to contract with a private hospice service?	YES	NO	YES	NO
THINGS TO CONSIDER	Home #1		Home #2	
Does the home provide or arrange for enough help with medications/pharmacy services, medical appointments, health monitoring, to meet the person's needs and preferences?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Do you feel confident in the staff's ability to meet your or your family member's daily medical needs, as well as the staff's ability to respond to emergencies?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Does the home provide or have the ability to arrange for all of the medical needs that you or your family member has?	YES	NO	YES	NO
NOTES:				

REHABILITATION SERVICES

Homes may or may not be licensed to provide rehabilitation services ordered by a doctor, but they should offer programs and activities designed to help the person maintain or improve upon his/her level of functioning. All service providers should promote the person's independence in the least restrictive and most dignified manner possible.

QUESTIONS TO ASK	Home #1		Home #2	
Does the home provide or arrange for rehabilitation services as ordered by a doctor?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Are there programs to help all residents maintain or increase independence?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Will the home keep you or your family member informed of how well rehabilitation is progressing and what comes next? Ask how.	YES	NO	YES	NO
Does the home provide a "home" assessment when therapy is completed?	YES	NO	YES	NO
THINGS TO CONSIDER	Home #1		Home #2	
Are you satisfied with the professionalism of the rehabilitation staff?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Have you talked with anyone who has used the home's rehab services? Were they satisfied?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Did you observe residents moving about independently?	YES	NO	YES	NO

NOTES:

CAREGIVING AND OTHER STAFF

Care and support provided should reflect staff that are dedicated, well-trained and committed to meeting you or your loved ones needs and wants.

QUESTIONS TO ASK	Home #1		Home #2	
Was the person who toured with you able to tell you how they know that they have enough staff to meet residents' or tenants' needs?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Were you told about the type of training and education staff receive and how often? Does it seem to be enough?	YES	NO	YES	NO
If you or the person who will live here have special medical or behavioral needs, is the staff educated in that area in order to provide the right care?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Are residents/tenants and/or family members encouraged to share what they know about how to provide specific aspects of care?	YES	NO	YES	NO
THINGS TO CONSIDER	Home #1		Home #2	
Is staff prompt and friendly during your tour?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Do staff greet other residents/tenants, family members or staff?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Do they seem concerned about your situation and enthusiastic about describing the home?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Do they seem inviting and willing to answer your questions?	YES	NO	YES	NO

NOTES:

BEDROOMS/PERSONAL LIVING SPACE

Homes should be respectful of the persons needs and wishes regarding personal space and roommates. Persons should be allowed and encouraged to decorate their personal space in whatever manner makes them feel "at home."

QUESTIONS TO ASK	Home #1		Home #2	
Can the home give you a private room, if needed or desired, and is there an extra charge?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Is the bedroom or apartment large enough for your or your family member's needs?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Does the home's policy on changing rooms if room mates don't get along?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Can personal items such as furniture and pictures be used in the bedroom or apartment?	YES	NO	YES	NO
THINGS TO CONSIDER	Home #1		Home #2	
Would you or your family member be comfortable with the bedroom or apartment shown to you?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Is the room equipped and ready for a telephone, television/cable, and internet access?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Are there enough electrical outlets?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Are there any costs associated with these services?	YES	NO	YES	NO

NOTES:

BATHROOMS

Using the bathroom is one of the most intimate and important times of the day. Homes should acknowledge this by respecting privacy and providing an environment that is supportive.

QUESTIONS TO ASK	Home #1		Home #2	
Are bathrooms private?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Can persons choose either a tub bath or shower for bathing?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Can persons indicate a preferred time of day for bathing?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Can special needs or preferences, such as a whirlpool bath, be accommodated and is there an extra charge?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Can the person who will live here bathe or shower as often as he or she likes?	YES	NO	YES	NO
THINGS TO CONSIDER	Home #1		Home #2	
Am I comfortable with staff's approaches to protecting privacy?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Are areas for bathing pleasant and homelike?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Do there appear to be enough bathrooms to meet all of the residents'/tenants' needs, and are they handicap accessible?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Are bathrooms and the areas around them clean and without unpleasant smells?	YES	NO	YES	NO

NOTES:

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

When touring, be sure to evaluate whether or not the home is not only attractive, but that it also meets your expectations regarding location, cleanliness, physical accommodation and overall comfort.

QUESTIONS TO ASK	Home #1		Home #2	
Is the home clean, odor free and decorated according to your tastes?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Is there a telephone available for public or private use?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Is there a charge for the use of the phone?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Is there a call system for emergencies in rooms or apartments?	YES	NO	YES	NO
THINGS TO CONSIDER	Home #1		Home #2	
Does the home seem to meet your or your family member's expectations for safe and comfortable living?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Would you feel proud to have people visit you or your loved one at this home?	YES	NO	YES	NO

NOTES:

SOCIAL OPPORTUNITIES & COMMUNITY ACCESS

Socialization can be an important part of healing and satisfaction. Homes should provide social opportunities that meet the needs and wants of individuals, as well as groups.

QUESTIONS TO ASK	Home #1		Home #2	
Do the people who live here plan the social programs?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Are there chances to do things outside of the home, such as eating out, shopping, sports events?	YES	NO	YES	NO
If there is a charge for programs, do I or my loved one have access to my money when I want it?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Is transportation provided, and is there an extra charge?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Are pets allowed to live with residents or tenants and is there an extra charge or restrictions?	YES	NO	YES	NO
THINGS TO CONSIDER	Home #1		Home #2	
Do the planned social opportunities fit with the things I or my loved one like to do?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Does there seem to be enough to do, each day and into the evening, including on weekends and holidays?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Is there a place to visit privately besides the bedroom?	YES	NO	YES	NO
If smoking is a concern, is it managed according to your needs or preferences or those of the person who might live here?	YES	NO	YES	NO

NOTES:

MEALS AND SNACKS

Homes should provide meals and snacks that are not only nutritious, but which also meet the personal or ethnic preferences of residents/tenants.

QUESTIONS TO ASK	Home #1		Home #2	
Do people eat in a dining room in or near their room or apartment?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Are there assigned seats in the dining room?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Can they choose to eat in their room or apartment if they prefer?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Is the dining room used for other activities?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Are meal times flexible, and snacks and fresh water available between meals?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Can visitors eat with the resident/tenant, and is there a charge for doing so? Are reservations needed?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Is there a private dining area available for special occasions?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Can special diets or personal preferences be accommodated? Can other foods be brought in by visitors?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Did there seem to be enough help available for those who need it?	YES	NO	YES	NO
THINGS TO CONSIDER	Home #1		Home #2	
Would I or the person who might live in the home be comfortable eating in the dining room?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Does the menu include foods that I enjoy, and does the staff seem to appreciate how important meals are?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Do the people who live here give advice about the menus and recipes?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Did the meal that I observed look appetizing and smell good?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Did the staff serving the meal seem friendly and concerned for how people enjoyed the meal?	YES	NO	YES	NO
NOTES:				

MAKING YOUR DECISION

Ask how changes in rates and services are communicated, and what "other charges" you might be responsible for.

If using personal funds, what happens if those were to run out? Ask about advanced notice required, use of down payments or security deposits. Will the staff assist in securing public funding, if needed, assistance in finding another home?

QUESTIONS TO ASK	Home #1		Home #2	
Does the home accept public funds (for example: medical assistance or family care)?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Are all charges and fees clearly identified?	YES	NO	YES	NO
THINGS TO CONSIDER	Home #1		Home #2	
Are you comfortable that the home can meet your needs?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Are there needs that you or your family member has that the home cannot meet?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Did you talk with any residents, tenants or visitors about how they like living here? Did they say anything that you need to look into more?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Do the people who live here overall look neat and clean, happy and involved in the life of the home?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Do the staff that you observe seem to treat others with respect and dignity? Do they seem to like their jobs?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Do the staff look neat and clean, alert and energetic?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Do the staff seem to respond quickly to those who need help? Did they greet you and seem friendly as you toured?	YES	NO	YES	NO
Would you feel proud to have other persons visit you or your loved one in this home?	YES	NO	YES	NO

OTHER OBSERVATIONS

NOTES:

OTHER OBSERVATIONS

NOTES:

OTHER OBSERVATIONS

NOTES:

OMBUDSMAN

(OM-BUDZ-MAN)

The word Ombudsman is Scandinavian. In this country the word has come to mean an advocate or helper. An Ombudsman protects and promotes the rights of long-term care consumers, working with residents and families to achieve quality care and quality of life. The program is required by both federal and state law. In Wisconsin the Board on Aging and Long Term Care operates the program statewide.

If you have a question or concern about resident rights please call our toll free number:
1-800-815-0015



**State of Wisconsin
Board on Aging and Long Term Care
Ombudsman Program**

1402 Pankratz St., Suite 111
Madison, WI 53704-4001
1.800.815.0015

website
email

longtermcare.wi.gov
boaltc@wisconsin.gov