

SENIOR LAWYER

THE VOICE OF EXPERIENCE

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SECTION INSIDE!

How to Help Your Client Choose the Place She Does Not Want to Live

By the SLD Elder Law Committee

Comparing Nursing Homes

If your clients are fortunate enough to have more than one facility in your area that is found acceptable, how do you help your clients compare the nursing homes?

One of the things to look at is the total number of beds in the facility and the total number of residents. The percentage of occupied beds may be indicative of the demand for the facility's services. However, a lower percentage of occupancy is not necessarily a negative factor because it may be that a new facility or a new wing of an established facility has been opened. Determine whether or not a facility is certified for Medicaid only or Medicare, or both.

The type of ownership for some people is a concern. Facilities may be for profit or not for profit. They may be run by a government entity, or they might be affiliated with a religious organization. Some facilities are affiliated with a hospital that is close by, and some nursing homes even are a wing or a floor of the hospital itself.

Nursing homes are inspected by government agencies; generally, the center for Medicare and Medicaid services (CMS of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [HHS]) and/or the local State Department of Health. These inspections are generally called "surveys" and are done periodically anywhere from every 9 to 15 months. Any deficiencies noted must be promptly corrected, and survey information is generally available to the consumer. Details of these surveys and what they may or may not reveal are beyond the scope of this article, but it is important to note that these survey results are available from every facility and should be reviewed with the managers of that facility.

Finally, the amount of staff and the qualifications of the staff (RN, LPN, etc.) should be discussed with the management of the facility.

Summary

As you can see, the selection of the proper long-term care facility can be a somewhat arduous and daunting process. However, there is no search that is more important to the individual and to the family of the individual who requires care.

A great deal of more detailed information concerning these topics is available on an excellent new website www.myziya.net. This free website provides listings and information on every licensed nursing home in the country and permits the practitioner to compare side-by-side nursing homes that clients may be interested in visiting. It is a valuable resource for professionals who are involved with the many aspects of long-term care, as well as to the consumers of long-term care. **ESL**