

The Nursing Home Decision Checklist

A calm, practical guide for families who don't know what to ask — but know something matters. You don't need to ask everything; just notice *how the facility answers*.

1. Questions families can realistically ask (*You are not being "difficult."*)

Staffing & daily care

- How many nurses are in the building during the day? At night?
- What does staffing look like on weekends?
- Who responds first if my family member needs help overnight?
- How often do you use agency or temporary staff?
- What happens if multiple staff call out sick?

Dementia & cognitive care (if relevant)

- How are residents with memory loss supported day to day?
 - What training do staff receive in dementia care?
 - How do you handle agitation, wandering, or refusal of care?
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2. Answers that should raise concern (and why)

(One red flag alone may not be decisive. Patterns matter.)

- “Staffing varies, but we’re fully compliant.”
- “That information is available online.”
- “Our star rating speaks for itself.”
- Vague or defensive answers to simple questions
- Inability to explain night or weekend coverage
- Staff who appear rushed, distracted, or avoid eye contact

Facilities that provide good care can usually explain how that care happens.

3. Red flags you can observe — without asking anything

- Call bells ringing unanswered
- Residents waiting long periods for assistance
- Strong odors in hallways or rooms
- Residents left unattended in common areas
- High visible staff turnover during your visit
- Families hovering anxiously over loved ones

Your instincts matter. If something feels off, it often is.

You don't need to understand every regulation to make a good decision

