

# What Questions Should We Be Asking As We Move Our Loved One Into a Care Home?



In researching available nursing homes for a family member, it's important to evaluate your options before making a decision. That involves asking the right questions to put together information that will guide your eventual decision.

Many families start out not really knowing what to ask – how to research a nursing home facility, and how to make sure they have some knowledge of the best choices in their local area and avoid nursing home abuse and neglect cases.

Here are some questions that will help you make the best decision. We've compiled some general categories of questions, all of which can have more granular follow-up questions that apply, but considering all of these aspects of nursing home care will give a family a good basis for making decisions. Use this guide to make choices about a nursing home facility in Arizona.

## Finding The Right Nursing Home – Facility Questions

Let's start with the obvious – families want to make sure that the facility is safe, and that staff is effective in caring for the residents. That means looking at things like staff ratios and response times. Some experts suggest walking the halls and listening for ringing phones – evaluating how long it takes for calls to be answered. That in turn provides some perspective on how well the staff is keeping on top of things.

Families may also ask questions about things like diet and kitchen operations, access to the outdoors, and other questions about the facility's day-to-day operations. As they go, they will begin to visualize what it's like to live in a particular facility, and how the top-level decisions of planners and business leaders impact the residents' lives.

## Is There A Culture Of Advocacy?

Another simple way to evaluate a nursing home is to look for an internal culture that promotes the well-being and safety of residents. It's a good sign, for example, if a facility has a resident's Bill of Rights posted prominently in a public area. Talking to staff will also give you some idea of how this culture has been set from the top, and how to know if a nursing home is safe. You may find a particularly caring person in a leadership role who helps to maintain a culture of excellence and respect for the seniors in the care of the business and staff.

## What Are Communications With Family Like?

Here's another type of question to consider as you evaluate nursing home choices. Who is responsible for connecting with the family? Who would one talk to with any questions or issues?

Even just doing a simple analysis can help you learn a lot about how a nursing home operates. Doing short interviews with people responsible for communications will answer a lot of questions about how the nursing home investigates any potential problems, and how people generally work with residents and their families. If families conduct a very simple trial run, say, leaving a voice mail or letter for someone in leadership, and get nothing in return, that can be a red flag. Conversely, if the staff is proactive about communications, that can be a big factor in decision making.



## How Much Does It Cost?

In an industry where care is expensive, it's important to ask about pricing. Having the numbers in hand helps families to plan, but it also gives them a signal that the facility will be transparent in other ways as well. Families should know how the enterprise works with Medicare, how items like waivers are dealt with, and how costs are calculated. Skilled nursing care is a particular industry with its own financial challenges, and some businesses may not be as forthcoming about the financial end of the service.

## How Does The Facility Rate?

While researching facilities, you can check out the [survey tool on the federal Medicare site](#). It can show things like whether a facility has correct sprinkler systems, Covid vaccination rates among staff, and other aspects of facility safety. This central resource is a good place to start in ranking care homes. Arizona has a similar service that you can access at <https://azdhs.gov/licensing/index.php#azcarecheck>.

## What Safety Infrastructure Is In Place?

Looking for rails, ADA facilities and lifts is part of analyzing a particular nursing home environment. A good facility must have adequate access infrastructure in place to keep seniors safe. The more a business invests in building safety, the better its reputation will be in the community.

## How Are Staff Doing?

In walking the halls and talking to people, one thing that families can look out for is the outlook and demeanor of staff members.

It can be relatively easy to tell whether staff members are calm and composed, or stressed out. Signs of stress may indicate high turnover, which in turn indicates that something is not right in a facility.

With these critical questions answered, families can get closer to making a final decision for the ones they love. In Arizona, these agencies also offer guidance on nursing home options for seniors:

- ★ [Arizona State Board of Nursing](#)
- ★ [Arizona Department of Health Services](#)

If you feel as though your loved one is not getting the care he or she deserves/is the victim of abuse or neglect/etc. call the Solomon & Relihan office for a free consultation at (602) 336-6147.