

# Hope & Healing

## Nursing Homes When a Nursing Home is Needed

A heart at peace gives life to the body — Proverbs 14:30

### Introduction \_\_\_\_\_

Selecting a nursing home is important and difficult and may be forced upon you suddenly. So you must gather enough information to make a wise decision. You can gather good solid information in a short period of time by following the guidelines in this handout. First, be sure a nursing home is what you need.

### Stay At Home Options \_\_\_\_\_

Your doctor, nurse, and social worker can help you decide whether a community-based service might be adequate. These are:

- Home health care.
- Transportation services.
- Home delivered meals.
- Chore workers to help with housework.
- Respite care for caregivers.
- Adult day care centers.
- A friendly visitors program.
- Hospice care.

### Long-Term Care Options \_\_\_\_\_

Although you can go to great lengths to keep older loved ones at home, you may not be able to offer the physical facilities or stand up under the strain. When home care and community

services are no longer adequate, you must decide on the best alternative for meeting personal and health care needs of your loved one. The alternatives are:

- **Residential Homes.** These provide room and board and may offer social, recreational, and spiritual programs.
- **Continuing Care Communities.** This is a relatively new concept. The idea is that all needs of the resident are met, including room and board, personal and health care, and social activities.
- **Skilled Nursing Facilities.** These facilities are the choice when 24-hour medical care is required.

### Choosing a Nursing Home \_\_\_\_\_

One good way of choosing the best nursing home is to study the following checklist and let it guide you in making your decisions.

#### Nursing Home Checklist Credentials

- Does the home have a current state license?
- Does the administrator have a current license?
- Is the home certified for Medicare and Medicaid programs?
- Are financial policies specified in a contract?

#### Residents

- Do residents seem well cared for and

generally content?

- Are most residents out of their beds, dressed, and, when possible, occupied?
- Are residents allowed to wear their own clothes and have some of their own furniture in their rooms?
- Is a statement of patient's rights posted?
- Is special care provided for Alzheimer's disease patients?
- Is the atmosphere warm and pleasant?
- Is the home accessible to family and friends?

#### Facility

- Do rooms provide privacy?
- Is there an activity room?
- Is the nursing home clean, orderly, and reasonably free of unpleasant odors?
- Are toilet and bathing facilities adequate and accessible to disabled persons?
- Are grab bars, handrails, and emergency call buttons located in rooms and halls?
- Does the building have smoke detectors, sprinkler systems, and emergency lighting?
- Does the home have a security system to prevent confused residents from wandering out of the building?
- What is the home's policy on the use of physical and chemical restraints?

## Staff

- Do employees show respect to residents?
- Are enough nurses and aides on duty at all hours, including weekends?
- Is the home sensitive to cultural and minority differences?
- What is the average length of time staff have worked in the home?
- Is regular and emergency medical attention assured?
- Does the home have arrangements with a hospital for transfer of patients in an emergency?

## Services

- Are pharmaceutical services available and supervised by a qualified pharmacist?
- Does the home offer physical therapy and rehabilitative services?
- Are interesting activities scheduled, including trips outside the home?
- Are arrangements made for residents to participate in religious practices and services?

## Meals

- Is a weekly menu available?
- Are the dining room and kitchen clean?
- Are meals nutritious, appetizing, and tasty?
- Does the staff assist residents who can't feed themselves?

## Making a Smooth Transition \_\_\_\_\_

Now that you have chosen a nursing home, let's talk about how to reduce the stress associated with such an important change.

Ask the nursing home if they have a social worker or nurse specialist who conducts pre-admission group sessions for family members. Be aware of the need to give comfort to the one going to the nursing home by going with them on moving day and by deciding beforehand which familiar items to take along, family photos and items to decorate with, for

example.

## The Need to Visit Often \_\_\_\_\_

The frequency of visits is an individual decision. But, frequent visits by family members help to create a more caring atmosphere in the nursing home. The resident is reassured that someone still cares. And, as the resident makes friends among other residents the visitor is often welcomed by the friend as well. Frequent visits improve morale and ensure better care.

## Problem Solving \_\_\_\_\_

If problems arise with the administrator or with the services of a nursing home, or your complaint is ignored or not reasonably answered, you may choose to get assistance from the Nursing Home Ombudsman, who is located in your state or local office on aging.

## Summary \_\_\_\_\_

It cannot be overemphasized that the only way to have peace of mind about making a difficult time a time that you can look back upon with the satisfaction that you did the right thing, is to prepare ahead of time and prepare well. Should you desire other information, write to the National Council of Senior Citizens, Nursing Home Information Service, National Senior Citizens Education and Research Center, Inc., 925 — 15<sup>th</sup> Street, NW, Washington, DC 20005.

## **Awaken the Miracles Within You**

### **The Miracle of Optimism**

Negative thoughts prevent hearts from being joyous. When you catch yourself thinking a negative thought, reject it immediately. Switch, instead, to the presence of God. Don't stop to say "Goodbye." Break the connection instantly and flood your mind with optimism. You will be surprised how troubles will begin to melt out of your life.

You may say, "I don't have negative thoughts." Maybe not, but listen carefully to your conversation for a day or two. More negative thoughts than you suspect will creep into your thoughts. Thoughts are swift and habits quick to follow. You may be embarrassed by how much negative thinking you really do.

And, don't forget that your life tomorrow is molded by how optimistic you are today.

*The recommendations and information in this handout are appropriate in most cases. However, for specific information concerning your personal medical condition, please, consult your doctor.*