

Location and atmosphere

- Is the home conveniently located? Look for a centre with close proximity to family and friends, as well as hospital(s) and personal physician(s).
- Is the building clean, inviting and well maintained?
- Is the atmosphere welcoming, with friendly, courteous staff?
- Do caregivers show respect and concern for residents and family members?
- Is there a common area for socializing, arts and crafts, and other activities?
- Do they have separate areas for private visits?
- What group and individual activities and programs are available?
- Are religious services held on the premises?
- What are meals like? Ask about dining procedures and policies on special dining or menu requests.
- What about safety and security features? Are there handrails in the hallways and grab bars in the bathrooms? Are hallways wide enough for two wheelchairs? Are there smoke detectors and sprinklers and alarm systems?

Rooms

- View a typical room, and ask how roommates are selected if applicable.
- How is privacy respected?
- How are valuable items stored or secured?
- What opportunities do residents have for personalizing the rooms?
- Are private telephone lines and TVs provided?

Individualized care

- Are care plans developed with residents and families?
- What specialty care programs are provided?
- Is the home ready for specific conditions, such as Alzheimer's and terminal illnesses?
- What medical professionals are available nearby (dentists, optometrists, etc.)? Are these services brought in the home?
- How are prescriptions handled and is medication managed as part of the care plan?
For specific therapy and rehabilitation needs, ask about the staff members involved and tour the therapy facilities.

Resident rights

- Does the home have a policy on individual rights, and a commitment statement dedicated to providing the best care and atmosphere for residents?
- Are restraining devices used? When and why?
- Does the home have a Resident or Family Council in which you can participate?

Quality

- Is the home accredited?
- Is the home a current member of professional associations?
- Is the latest government inspection report available for review?
- Does the home have a quality improvement and assurance program?
- Does the home share results and challenges and opportunities for improvement?
- Are staff education programs in place?
- Does the home feel inviting?
- Do residents and staff look happy?

Understand that every home has a unique culture and atmosphere. It is important to determine whether the environment is a good match for you or your family member. You can determine this fit in the following ways:

- Talk to the residents and their families about their likes and dislikes.
- Talk to various staff members to get a sense of their attitude towards the home and their jobs.
- Ask to see more than just your room and common areas.
- Ask for copies of sample menus, activity calendars and newsletters.
- Ask if you are able to sample a meal or participate in an activity at the home.
- Bulletin boards can be a great source of information. Look for notes or reports from resident and family councils, quality improvement teams, administrator, or any documentation from the regulator, funder and accrediting organization.

**Helping people
live better**