

ILLINOIS CITIZENS FOR BETTER CARE: NURSING HOME CHECKLIST

Bring this checklist with you when you visit possible nursing homes. Try to fill it in either while you are visiting the home, or immediately afterward, while your memory is still fresh.

Write whatever you think is important, even if it isn't an issue raised on the checklist. If you think we have missed something important, please email or call ICBC to tell us, so we can improve this checklist for other families. You can reach us at icbc@core.com, or 312-663-5120.

Name of Home A _____

Name of Home B _____

Name of Home C _____

CHECKLIST ITEM	Nursing Home A	Nursing Home B	Nursing Home C
Tour given by (name, job title)			
Does the home have a current unconditional license from the state? (A "conditional" license means the home has recently committed a serious violation.) The license must be posted "conspicuously," in an area accessible to visitors. Usually this means the lobby.			
According to the posted information in the lobby: a. How many residents live in the nursing home today? b. How many registered nurses are on duty on the day shift? On the evening shift? c. How many licensed practical nurses are on duty on the day shift? On the evening shift? d. How many certified nursing assistants are on duty on the day shift? On the evening shift?	a. _____ b. _____; _____ c. _____; _____ d. _____;	a. _____ b. _____; _____ c. _____; _____ d. _____;	a. _____ b. _____; _____ c. _____; _____ d. _____;

How long has the administrator worked there? the Director of Nursing? the social worker?			
--	--	--	--

GENERAL IMPRESSIONS

Is the general atmosphere of the home warm, pleasant and cheerful?	.	.	.
Is the home clean and orderly?	.	.	.
Does the home smell offensive?			
Do residents look well cared for and generally content?			
Do residents seem to be alert or sleepy / seem to be drugged?			
Do residents seem to be wearing their own clothing? Is it clean?			
Are residents dressed appropriately/adequately for indoors? Outdoors?			
Are staff members cheerful, courteous and enthusiastic?	.	.	.
Do staff members act and speak respectfully toward residents?	.	.	.
Do staff members knock and ask permission before entering residents' rooms?			
Do the staff seem to have enough time to help residents appropriately?			
Are call lights being answered promptly?			
Do staff members show genuine interest in and affection for residents?	.	.	.
Are all staff wearing name tags?			

WHERE ARE THE RESIDENTS AND WHAT ARE THEY DOING

Are many residents in the hallways? What are they doing: sitting? sleeping? wandering aimlessly? going somewhere?			
---	--	--	--

Are many residents in their rooms? What are they doing: sitting in a chair? in bed? sleeping? doing something?			
Do some residents seem to be "restrained" in chairs or in bed, so they cannot get up or move freely?			
What is the nursing home policy about using alternatives to restraints? (ASK)			
What is the nursing home policy about using psychotropic drugs for residents who do not have a mental illness? (ASK)			
Do the residents seem to be people your loved one would be comfortable with?			
Look at the schedule of posted activities. Are the activities things your loved one would enjoy?			
Are activities scheduled during your visit actually happening? Do the residents seem to be engaged/interested in them?			
Are there activities appropriate for your loved one scheduled for evenings and weekends?			
Is there an activities room or lounge besides the dining room? On every floor? (ASK)			
What activities are there for residents who cannot easily leave their rooms? (ASK)			
Is the interaction between residents safe and respectful?			
Are there newspapers / periodicals / books / games for residents? (ASK)			
Are there religious services your loved one would appreciate? (ASK)			

RESIDENTS' ROOMS

Do all residents have private rooms? (ASK)			
If rooms are shared, how many have two residents? Three? Four? (ASK)			
Do shared rooms have enough space?			

Are there bathrooms in every bedroom? If not, how many residents share a bathroom? (ASK)			
Do residents' rooms seem to be decorated with personal possessions?			
Does every resident have a reading light, a comfortable chair, and closet space and drawers for personal belongings?			
What possessions (including furniture, chair, pictures, small fridge) can a resident bring from home? (ASK)			
Do residents have fresh drinking water within reach?			
Do residents have emergency call buttons within reach?			
Is there locked private storage in every resident's room? (ASK)			
Is there a phone in every resident's room? If not, is there a phone jack? If no room phone, how do residents make/get phone calls? (ASK)			
Is there a television in every resident's room? If not, is there room for a resident's own television? (ASK)			

THE BUILDING AND GENERAL POLICIES

What is the smoking policy? (ASK) Is this acceptable?			
Is there a safe, comfortable outdoor area residents can use? Can residents get there by themselves? (ASK)			
Is there a comfortable place for private visits with family and friends? (ASK)			
Are there limited visiting hours for family and friends? (ASK) (Not all nursing homes respect residents' right to have visitors whenever they want.)			
Is there wi-fi or other internet access for residents, or for visitors to use with residents? (ASK)			
What is the emergency back-up hospital for the home? (ASK)			

Is there a family council? How can you get to talk with a council member? (ASK)			
--	--	--	--

TALK TO RESIDENTS AND OTHER VISITORS

Do residents seem comfortable talking about the home?			
Do they speak favorably about the home? What do they like best? Like least?			
What do the residents wish they knew about living there before they moved in?			
Do residents get to decide when they wake up and go to bed? If not, when do they get up, and when is bedtime? (Not all nursing homes respect residents' right to decide when they wake up and go to bed.)			
Do they like the food? Is there enough food?			
Are there nutritious snacks between meals and at night?			
Is there coffee/tea/juice/milk available between meals and at night?			
If you meet a resident you can return to visit: ask what you can bring as a gift next time.			
Do other visitors, such as family members, seem comfortable talking about the home?			
Do they speak favorably about the home? What do they like best? Like least?			
What do family members or other visitors wish they had known about the home before their loved one moved in?			

How does the facility respond to complaints? Do staff treat complaints respectfully, and respond appropriately (including timely)? Do they say the person must be imagining things? Do they say if you don't like it here, leave? (ASK)			
If other family members are willing, share contact information (if you have more questions, or for mutual help if your loved one moves in.)			
Do the family members or residents have a doctor at the nursing home they think is good? Who? Why? Is the doctor easy to reach? (ASK)			
Are the residents usually cared for by the same nurses and nursing assistants? How often do residents get new caregivers? (ASK)			
How often are residents helped to bathe? Is there a choice of bath or shower? (ASK)			

TALK TO THE NURSES, NURSING ASSISTANTS, ACTIVITIES STAFF

Do the staff seem comfortable talking about the home?			
Do they talk favorably about the home? What do they like? What do they dislike?			
How long have they worked there? Compared to other nursing homes, how much staff turnover is there?			
Do they usually take care of the same residents every day? How often do they get changed to new residents?			

MEALTIME

Watch a meal. Eat the food. What is it? Would your loved one eat it? Like it?			
Is the food the right temperature? Does it look good? Smell good?			
Does what is being served match the printed menu?			

Do residents seem to have enough food, and enough time to eat? Do they seem to be eating enough?			
Are staff encouraging residents to eat and drink?			
Are residents who need help eating, getting it when they need it? Is the help humane and respectful, or are staff shoveling food into residents?			
Is the atmosphere in the dining room appropriate for mealtime?			
Can the nursing home meet your special dietary needs? (ASK)			

ALZHEIMER'S / MEMORY LOSS UNIT (if you care)

Is there a special unit for residents with Alzheimer's disease or other kinds of memory loss? (ASK)			
Can residents on Medicaid enter or stay on the unit? (ASK)			
Are there standards for when a resident is too impaired to stay on the unit? What are they? (ASK)			
Do the same staff always work on the unit? (ASK)			
What special training do the unit staff get? (ASK)			
Are there special cues (such residents' pictures on doors, picture of toilet on bathroom) to help residents stay oriented?			
What are the special activities for residents of the unit? (ASK)			
Are there activities schedules for evenings and weekends? (ASK)			
What special materials (crafts, music, cooking, etc) do residents of the unit and their families have access to? (ASK)			

How often do the residents go outside? (ASK)			
How many residents live on the unit? (ASK)			
How many staff work on the unit on each shift? Nurses? Nursing assistants? Activities staff? (ASK)			
Is the staffing for the unit different on weekends? How? (ASK)			

FINANCIAL ISSUES (for residents not entering on Medicaid)

For a resident entering using her own savings: what is the projected monthly cost of care?	\$	\$	\$
Does the home require a resident to pay privately (not using Medicaid) before switching to Medicaid? For how long?			
Are all the home's beds in the Medicaid program?			
Will the home guarantee that when the resident's savings run out, [s]he can go on Medicaid?			
Is there currently a waiting list to get onto Medicaid?			

NOTES

