

Choose Long-Term Care Facility Run By Licensed Professionals

You have to make a choice. The choice will affect you, a loved one, a relative, or a friend. You've agonized over the negative reports and "horror stories." You've read all the tips and "how-to's." Which nursing home or long-term care facility will be the right choice?

First you should know about two of the key professionals in the field:

■The Long-Term Care Administrators: dedicated to providing safe, comfortable environments, fostering the highest possible levels of independence for nursing home residents.

■The American College of Health Care Administrators: the only professional society that represents administrators in long-term care facilities. ACHCA has over 6,000 members nationwide and promotes excellence through education, certification, a code of ethics and standards of practice.

How To Begin

Evaluate the facility's personnel as carefully as the facility's physical plant. What are the professional qualifications of the staff? What are the attitudes of the administrator toward patient care, family involvement,

and the staff of the facility? How do nurses, aides, and other staff members relate to residents?

Find out if the facility's administrator is a member or fellow of the American College of Health Care Administrators (ACHCA). Check to see if the administrator has been certified by ACHCA.



This may be the most important step because the quality of care is directly related to the skills and commitment of the administrator. Members of ACHCA adhere to a strict Code of Ethics and a clearly-defined standard of practice.

Focus On Professionals

Focus on the professionals who will be caring for the nursing home resident. Long-term care workers, at all levels, are an extraordinarily dedicated group. They continue, day after day, to brighten the lives of vulnerable, often chronically

debliterated individuals. You should know that the long-term care industry is led by professionals who have affirmed, and reaffirmed, a commitment to quality patient care.

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People With Disabilities Are Guaranteed Fairness By Law

Employment provisions of the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) spell out the responsibilities for all firms of at least 25 employees to accommodate people with disabilities in the work place.

But the ADA alone cannot ensure accommodations; people with arthritis or other disabilities need to understand the law and educate employers.

The ADA is enforceable only by private individuals who bring charges through the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). Employers covered under the ADA are prohibited from discriminating against qualified individuals with a disability in job applications, hiring, compensating, training and testing or screening.

The ADA requires employers to make reasonable accommodation unless it would impose an undue hardship on the employer to do so. The law also restricts employer's rights to conduct pre- or post-employment physicals. Pre-employment physicals can be given only to determine whether the applicant can perform job-related activities and must be conducted only after an offer of employment has been made.

People Over 65 More Prone To Problems With Medicines

Studies show that people over 65 may be three or more times likely as younger adults to have problems with medications, reports the Arthritis Foundation.

Although people over age 65 comprise only 12 percent of the U.S. population, they consume at least one-fourth of all prescription medications. The elderly appear more likely to misuse medications in part because of the many different medications they often must take.

Seniors taking multiple medications also are at risk for drug interactions, where one drug alters the action of another. One danger is that adverse reactions can mimic diseases that often occur with aging.

The Arthritis Foundation points out that while no one can eliminate all problems that come with medications, there are precautions people can take to reduce the risk. "One of the most important things you can do is have your doctor explain any medication prescribed for you, its possible side effects and potential to interact with other drugs," says Arthur Graysel, M.D., the foundation's senior vice president for medical affairs.

The foundation offers other suggestions to reduce the risk of medication-related problems in its brochure on medications.

For a free copy, check the phone directory for your local Arthritis Foundation chapter or call toll-free the Arthritis Foundation Information Line at 1-800-283-7800 (Monday - Friday, 9 a.m. - 7 pm. Eastern Time).

The Arthritis Foundation is the source of help and hope for an estimated 37 million Americans who have arthritis. The foundation supports research to find ways to cure and prevent arthritis and seeks to improve the quality of life for those affected by arthritis.

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