



## Process for Achieving *Your Way* !

### Step-By-Step Process for Determining Which Home is Right for You

While selecting a long-term care facility is a difficult decision, it is also probably one of the most important decisions you will ever make. This questionnaire is designed to help you assess the quality of life and care that a Home provides when you visit. It includes general questions that should be asked by all prospective residents and/or their families and is designed to help sort out what is important to you and/or the potential resident, generate conversation, and discover the philosophies and procedures of the Home (the things that determine what it may be like to actually live there).

There are a couple of other important things to note about the questionnaire:

- When a person moves into a care facility, it becomes their Home. Thus, when "Home" is used in this document we are typically referring to Nursing Homes or Assisted Livings.
- The term "Resident" is frequently used in Nursing Homes to refer to the person living in the Home. This is another term used for patient, client, etc.
- The value of these questions is going to vary from person to person. Some questions will be very important to you; other less so. The decision on the best home for you is an individual one.
- Observations are a key part of this evaluation and decision process. The answers to these questions are going to be based on your personal judgment and the more observant you are, the better your judgment. Try to keep the questions that are most important to you in mind throughout your whole tour and interview.
- You will notice "bonus" questions throughout the questionnaire. These questions refer to practices that are permitted by regulators but are not featured in many Homes. If the Home you are visiting features any of these practices, you may find that they are more advanced than others in becoming a "person-centered" care Home.

### Using the Tool

The steps below outline how to best decide which Nursing Home will be right for you.

1. Select up to 4 homes (recommended) to research and visit.
2. Conduct Internet Research on the Homes. Try and stay away from sites that end in ".com" and focus on ".gov", ".edu" or ".org" sites. Here are some important websites that can help with this search.
  - Federal Website for quality review: [www.medicare.gov/nursinghomecompare](http://www.medicare.gov/nursinghomecompare)
  - State Website for quality review, including annual inspection results:  
<http://www.idph.state.il.us/webapp/LTCApp/listing.jsp?facilityid=6014294>
3. Make an appointment and visit the Nursing Home using the ***Your Way Questionnaire***. We recommended that you visit 2 times with one of those times in the evening or weekend.
4. After you visit all the homes that you are considering, compare homes to each other.

## Explanations of Questions:

The Questionnaire has been broken into sections. Below we have conveyed the reasoning behind why the questions in each section are being asked.

**Care Practice:** How staff care for the individual is of utmost importance. When thinking about what is important for you, reflect on what life is like at home and expect that for your life - or your family member's life - in a Nursing Home. Here are some of the things that can influence the care you receive.

- When staff cares for the same individuals every day, relationships develop naturally, and staff are better able to understand the needs, preferences, and expectations of the persons in their care.
- Some Homes hire “agency staff” to fill in when they do not have enough employees to cover a shift. Agency staff members typically do not know the residents well, if at all, because they do not work at the same Nursing Home all the time. Thus, the practice of contracting out for staff is not considered a practice of person-centered care.
- We are all individuals and have our preferences. The time one goes to bed at night and wakes up in the morning is an example of a very personal and very important lifestyle preference. When that choice is not available the entire day can be affected. In a Nursing Home, we should expect to be able to get up and go to bed when we want to, just as we do in our own homes.
- Call bells or lights are used by the residents to signal to staff that they need assistance. You may observe call lights over the doorways of the residents' rooms or hear signals going off in the rooms or the hallways. It should be the responsibility of all staff to respond to these signals - not just the Nursing assistant or the nurse. If lights or bells are going off for an extended period of time, it may be a sign that staff are not very responsive to the resident's needs. The only way to measure this is to look, listen and observe.
- As with any job, certain people are more suited to work in this field than others. If people enjoy what they are doing, they are going to do a better job. This is just a fact of life! If they are smiling, they are enjoying what they are doing, that is why observing how people engage and interact is important.

**Environment:** How the space around us looks can affect how we feel about the place and how we feel when we are there. When thinking about our own homes, there are probably certain things or aspects which are important in defining that space as our home. A big piece of this is simply having a place of our own. What defines “home” for you? Here are some things to consider.

- There should be no limit to when a resident can have visitors. Doors may be locked for safety at a certain time but a buzzer or doorbell should be available so a resident can have visitors whenever they like.
- Having comfortable places to go, to relax or visit is important. This includes outdoor spaces for most of us. Your room should be your personal space but people also want to be able to visit outside of the room in a comfortable, inviting space.
- As we age, environment can play a big role in our safety. Bathrooms, hallways, and common spaces should be evaluated for safety and accessibility.

- Paging systems and other overhead speakers usually are not used in a home environment. In a Nursing Home, paging systems are set up for staff convenience. Having to listen to people talking to each other through an overhead paging system can be annoying and can cause problems with concentration and sleep. Person-centered/directed homes will use their phone system, pagers, or the like to talk with each other so that residents do not have to hear communications between staff members.

**Dining:** Dining is not just about consuming food. It is an opportunity for socializing as well as for enjoying the pleasures of a meal. Fortunately, institutional dining can be an easy thing to change with a little effort.

- Think about how we dine at home. For the most part, we eat at our own preferred mealtimes or when we are hungry; we do not eat off of trays; and everyone seated at the table receives their food at about the same time. These things should not change when you are living in a Nursing Home.
- Many Culture Change Homes have changed their dining service to provide a better experience. Examples:
  - Restaurant Service – staff take meal requests based upon menu choices and serve it to you at your table.
  - Buffet Style – Food is available on a steam table and you can either go to the steam table and request what you want or staff can take your order and get it for you.
  - Family Style – Platters or bowls of food are placed on each table and you can take what you want.

**Everyday Life:** How we spend our time is a very personal choice. What is important for one may not be important for another. Although this is a fact of life, having a good quality to our day is still very achievable while living in a Nursing Home.

When asking the questions in this section, think about them from the point of view of the person who will be living in the Home. Be specific about the individual's preferences for daily life and see if those preferences will be available when living in the Home. This includes all aspects of daily life which are important to the person, including those related to work or hobbies, recreation, social life, leisure, and private time, etc.

**Culture Change:** The questions in this section allow you to assess the Home's awareness of and commitment to person centered/directed care. Some Homes will be further along than others in accepting and implementing the practices of Culture Change. Some will need to make changes and others may need to maintain or improve changes they have already made.

How do we know if a Home is interested in changing and/or improving? One indicator is communication. A Home that values information from residents, families and staff and provides regular opportunities for communication is usually a Home that is interested in improving. Below are some communication-related ways a Home demonstrates its focus on person-centered care.

- Creates opportunities for conversations by conducting meetings with families, residents and staff.
- Measures staff, family and resident satisfaction thoroughly and regularly.

- Uses Resident Questionnaires to get to know the residents better and “I” Care Plans where the care of the resident is expressed in his/her voice to promote a deeper understanding of why the care practice is important (i.e. I have been a diabetic my whole life, but I am still able to have desert with my meal. I have done this my whole life and know how to regulate my sugar.”).
- Involvement in the Illinois Pioneer Coalition (which promotes person-centered/directed care).
- Conducts neighborhood meetings where everyone who lives on the same floor discusses whatever they would like. This practice helps build a sense of community between the Home and residents.
- Provides a Family Council where family members meet, discuss issues, and make recommendations. This helps build a sense of community between the Home and the families.
- Distributes and explains the Home’s mission statement
- Talks to residents and their families and asks them their opinions about the Home.
- And most importantly, follows through on the information received: changes policies or procedures, when necessary, trains staff adequately and regularly provides feedback or updates to residents, staff and families.

**Other Important Questions:** Staff turnover is another method of measuring staff satisfaction. The national average of turnover for Nursing assistants in Nursing Homes is 66%. If staff is satisfied, the turnover rate is usually below 40%.

- The longevity of the Administrator and the Director of Nursing can be an indicator regarding the stability of the Home.
- Staff to resident ratios should be compared against each other. There are no state specific regulations for the number of caregivers to residents because the type of care that is provided by the Home or the type of care that an individual resident may need will affect this ratio. It is important though to compare this number from Home to Home keeping in mind the acuity of the care that is being provided in the home.
- The Illinois Department of Public Health surveys each Home on an annual basis. Legally the written survey must be available to all people all the time. You should always ask to see the survey for any home you are considering.

**When looking at the surveys, keep in mind the following:** Nursing Homes are reviewed at least once a year by the State. There are many items, both large and small, which are reviewed during this annual review. Thus it is very rare to have a survey with absolutely no violations. Deficiencies are meant to make the Home aware of opportunities for improvement. It is how they respond and react to the deficiency that is important so do not be afraid to talk with the Home about their survey and ask them what they did to improve upon the deficiency.

- Look carefully at the items that were rated deficient and consider the importance of each one, the number of residents affected by each and the number of total deficiencies.

**Supplemental Questions for Specific Concerns:** We have also included questions at the end of the questionnaire that may be more specific to individual needs of care such as therapy services, Dementia/Alzheimer’s care, etc. Not all of these questions will pertain to you or your family members. Adapt them for your own use and use at your discretion.

## ***Your Way!* Questionnaire**

### **Summary Sheet for Nursing Home Questions**

**Directions:**

- Make copies of this form for each Nursing Home that you are going to visit for a tour.
- Number each Nursing Home so that you can correlate this number on the Nursing Home Comparisons Summary Sheet on page 49. Make sure you place this number on the top of each page so that you can easily keep track of the information.

Nursing Home Comparison Number:		
Name: _____		
Address: _____		
Phone: _____		
Contact: _____		
Notes		
<b>Evaluation Area</b>	<b>Nursing Home Score</b> <small>(number of “yes” responses in each category on the attached Questionnaire)</small>	<b>Comments</b>
Care Practices		
Environment		
Dining		
Everyday Life		
Culture Change		

## Your Way! Questionnaire

<b>Nursing Home Comparison Number:</b>			
<u>Care Practices</u>			
<b>Questions</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Is the same Nursing Assistant consistently assigned to care for the Resident?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
➤ When the regular Nursing Assistant is not scheduled to work, is a substitute Assistant consistently assigned to care for the Resident?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Is the same Nurse consistently assigned to care for the Resident?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
➤ When the regular Nurse is not scheduled for work, is a substitute Nurse consistently assigned to care for the Resident?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Do all the staff work for the Nursing Home and not for an outside agency?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Can Residents decide when to go to bed and wake up in the morning?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Can Residents get a bath or shower as often as they would like?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
➤ Can Residents select between a bath or shower?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Will the staff meet with the Resident, and/or the family, to discuss concerns whenever they would like?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Observations</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	
Do the Residents look well cared for?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Do you observe that Nurse call bells or lights are not ringing or flashing for excessive periods of time?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Do you observe staff smiling and saying hello to Residents, each other and visitors?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Care Practice Totals</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

**Nursing Home Comparison Number:**

**Environment**

<b>Questions</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Is visiting time unrestricted?			
Does the Home have a garden/outdoor space that the Residents can access without staff and is wheelchair accessible?			
Is there space available for families and visitors to visit in private besides just the Resident's room?			
Can Residents decorate their own rooms with bedding and pictures?			
<b>Bonus:</b> Can Residents bring in their own furniture to decorate their room?			
<b>Observations</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Do the Resident rooms look pleasant and comfortable?			
Is the Home free of objectionable odors as you walk through the hallways?			
Does the Home appear clean?			
Are hallways uncluttered so that people and wheelchairs can move about freely?			
Ask to see where Residents bathe. Does this space look clean, comfortable and safe?			
Is there no overhead paging going on throughout the hallways?			
<b>Environment Totals</b>			

**Nursing Home Comparison Number:**

**Dining**

Mealtime Hours:

Breakfast:

Lunch:

Dinner:

<b>Questions</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Are meal times for at least 2 hours?			
Can Residents eat a full meal any time between these hours ?			
If someone doesn't want to eat at the time of the meal, can they eat later?			
Is there restaurant, buffet, or family style type of dining?			
Can Residents select from at least two choices for their main entree?			
Can families/visitors dine with the Resident if they choose? (at a cost or for free)			
Are snacks and drinks available 24-hours a day at no additional cost?			
<b>Observations</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Are Residents eating without trays?			
Are Residents sitting at the same table served their food about the same time?			
Are Resident's mealtime requests provided in a prompt manner?			
Do staff give individual assistance to those that need it?			
Is there a pleasant aroma in the dining room?			
Sample the food. Does it taste good?			
Does the dining room have a comfortable feel to it ?			
<b>Dining Totals</b>			



Nursing Home Comparison Number:			
Everyday Life			
Questions	Yes	No	Comments
Are Resident birthdays celebrated on the actual date and not just at a group celebration every month?			
Do children come into the Home to interact with the Residents?			
Is there a store, gift shop or cart available where Residents can purchase items?			
Are there outings into the community?			
Do Residents have access to a computer and internet?			
Will the Home accommodate specific daily interests of the individual such as religious, educational, and <i>fun</i> things?			
Does the Home have any pets?			
<b>Bonus:</b> Are Residents allowed to bring their own dog or cat to <i>live</i> with them in the Home?			
<b>Bonus:</b> Do Residents have access to washers and dryers to do their own laundry if they would like?			
Observations	Yes	No	Comments
Are Residents smiling?			
Are families smiling?			
Look at the Activity Calendar. Are there a variety of activities being offered?			
Are programs offered in the evenings?			
Are programs offered on the weekends?			
<b>Everyday Life Totals</b>			

**Nursing Home Comparison Number:**

**Culture Change**

<b>Questions</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Are you a Culture Change Nursing Home?			
➤ Have Staff have received training in culture change and person centered/directed care?			
➤ Other then Resident Council, do you hold meetings where the Residents/families provide suggestions and ideas.			
➤ Do you measure staff satisfaction ?			
➤ Do you measure Resident/family satisfaction?			
<b>Culture Change Totals</b>			

**What other things do you do to consider yourself a Culture Change Nursing Home?**

<b>Nursing Home Comparison Number:</b>	
<b>Other Important Questions</b>	
<b>Questions</b>	<b>Response</b>
What is your percentage of Nursing Assistant Turnover?	
How long has the Administrator worked here in this position?	
How long has the Director or Nursing worked here in this position?	
How many Residents does each Nursing Assistant care for during a shift?	
How many Residents does each Nurse care for during a shift?	
How many violations did you receive on your last survey? Ask to see the report.	
Whom do I go to if I have a problem:	

<b>Supplemental Questions for Specific Concerns</b>	
<b>Concern</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<p>Therapy services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Types of therapy offered <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Physical</li> <li>○ Occupational</li> <li>○ Speech</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Number of days per week treatment offered</li> <li>• Hours of service</li> </ul> <p>Physician:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expected number of visits</li> <li>• How selected</li> <li>• Can my own physician follow me?</li> <li>• Transportation for appointments</li> </ul> <p>Room selection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Private verses shared rooms</li> <li>• Maximum number of Residents sharing rooms</li> <li>• How are roommates decided upon?</li> </ul> <p>Special Services you may require such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dialysis treatment</li> <li>• Alzheimer's/dementia care</li> <li>• Psychiatric</li> <li>• Skin Care</li> <li>• Chronic Pain</li> </ul>	

# Your Way!

## Nursing Home Comparisons Sheet

Use the table below to compare the Homes that you have visited. Some of the questions asked are going to have more value and meaning for one person over another, so do not just make your decision based upon the overall score.

*In order to make the right decision for you or your loved one, you need to decide what is important to you personally.*

Nursing Home	Home 1	Home 2	Home 3	Home 4	Comments
Care Practices:					
Environment:					
Dining:					
Every Day Life:					
Culture Change:					
Nursing Assistant Turnover percentage:					
Longevity of the Administrator:					
Longevity of the Director of Nurses:					
Number of Residents each Nursing Assistant cares for:					
Number of Residents each Nurse cares for:					
Number of violations on the last survey:					