

## How Do I Choose The Right Nursing Home?

### *What you need to know to avoid nursing home abuse or neglect*

Whenever you move a loved one into a nursing home or assisted living facility, it can be incredibly stressful.

One of the biggest concerns will be making sure your parent or relative will be adequately cared for while in the nursing home. And for good reason:

- The [National Center on Elder Abuse](#) estimates that 1.5 million Americans age 65 or older have been injured or abused by someone on whom they depended for care or protection.
- Of the one million nursing home residents that are abused or neglected each year, 2/3 of those are women.
- Only one in 14 elder abuse or neglect cases are ever reported to the authorities.
- In 2001, one out of every four nursing homes was cited for causing death or serious injury to a resident.

“No matter how nice a facility or its amenities appear, mistreatment and improper care can still occur. If you suspect abuse or neglect, do not wait for supervisors or other authorities to report the problem. Go to the police and your local ombudsman directly,” attorney [Gary Martin Hays](#) said.

### **Top 5 things to consider when choosing a nursing home**

How do you choose the right facility and the best possible care for your loved one? Here are the top five things you should take into consideration:

1. Know your loved one. Familiarize yourself with their medical and social needs.
2. Check state or national inspections or ratings. They give you some insight into quality and staffing. If the facility has multiple issues – especially recent ones – you should think twice before you select that one for your mom or dad.
3. Visit frequently and at different times of the day and night. Meet with different managers and ask the same questions. It will give you a chance to observe them and their interactions with residents. Frequent visits at different times show a broader view of what life at the community looks like and if the quality of care is consistent.
4. Let your five senses guide your decision. Do you see happy residents? Smiles on their faces - as well as on the staff? Taste the food. What do you hear while walking around? Music? Laughter? And smell is a big one.

5. Find a trustworthy advocate. Find someone who knows the senior care industry. The advocate will have insider information on management, and staff turnover. Someone that knows the senior care industry can tell you about each facility – its reputation, the level of care and the facility’s track record on providing that care. They can also help you with the transition and future needs.

### **How can I tell if nursing home abuse or neglect is happening?**

Nursing homes may try to hide these mistakes. But there are ways to tell if a loved one is being abused or neglected:

- Neglect for a patient can include unintentional lack of care for existing medical problems or lack of attention to the needs of the patient. The patient may have bedsores (also known as ulcers), skin rashes, infections, dehydration, skin tears, significant weight loss, depression, or found wandering outside of the facility.
- Abuse is when someone intentionally does or does not do something knowing that the patient will be affected in some way. Signs of abuse may include bruises or welts, fear or anxiety, refusing to communicate, disorientation, unjustified physical restraints, deprivation of food or water, and injuries requiring emergency treatment.

Should the worst occur, you have legal options. Hiring an attorney helps ensure those businesses are held accountable, especially if they did not report the abuse or tried to cover up any neglect or wrongdoing by an employee.

“I urge people to speak with a personal injury attorney who specializes in nursing home abuse cases to get the help they need,” attorney Hays said.