

# Making the grade worksheet: SKILLED NURSING FACILITIES

This worksheet is designed to familiarize you with the types of services offered by skilled nursing facilities. Consider reviewing the guide in advance of your visit, and bring along a copy of this questionnaire to take notes and evaluate the community based on your impressions.

## Prior to your visit:

Please look up each facility's rating on: [www.medicare.gov/nursinghomecompare](http://www.medicare.gov/nursinghomecompare), or on state websites referenced on the same website.

Skilled nursing facilities are medical facilities that offer on-site nurses and nurse practitioners, social workers and dietitians. These facilities, also known as nursing homes, provide the highest level of medical care, with 24-hour nursing care for residents with serious medical conditions and/or advanced dementia or cognitive impairment.

At a skilled nursing facility, a licensed physician supervises each patient's care, and a nurse or other medical professional is always on the premises. In addition to skilled nursing care, skilled nursing facilities may offer rehabilitation, medical services and protective supervision, as well as assistance with ADLs.

A physician oversees each resident's care, and often occupational and physical therapy are available on-site, as well as assistance with bathing, feeding or dressing. Medicaid will cover most of the costs but only for those with very limited income. Medicare covers only a limited amount of the costs, up to 100 days after a hospitalization. Also, not all skilled nursing facilities accept Medicaid. Coverage by long-term care insurance varies by policy.

## Use this guide to assess the skilled nursing facilities you are considering:

### Community profile

Name of community		Date visited
Address		Phone no.
City	State	Zip code
Contact name		Your rating 1–5 (5 being the highest)

Release from liability: Any selections the individual or family makes in terms of care are the sole responsibility of the decision maker. The Financial Advisor, Legg Mason, and The Center for Innovative Care in Aging at the Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing are held harmless and released from any liability that may occur from selecting a care center, caregiver, community or facility.

## Community basics

Number of:

Residents (total) \_\_\_\_\_ Units/beds (total) \_\_\_\_\_

Average length of stay \_\_\_\_\_

Setting (e.g., in-town, suburban, country) \_\_\_\_\_

Average age of the residents \_\_\_\_\_

Name of developer/sponsor \_\_\_\_\_

Is the sponsor for profit not-for-profit (Affiliated with: \_\_\_\_\_ )

Occupancy rate (%) \_\_\_\_\_

Semi-private or private rooms? \_\_\_\_\_

Is there a waiting list? Yes No

Cost to join the waiting list \_\_\_\_\_

Is the cost refundable? Yes No

Length of waiting list \_\_\_\_\_

How is the waiting list managed? \_\_\_\_\_

Overall Medicare rating \_\_\_\_\_

## Location

Convenient to family? Yes No

Convenient to friends? Yes No

Convenient to medical care (e.g., doctors, specialists, hospitals, specialized rehabilitation facilities)? Yes No

## Community environment

Does it feel welcoming? Yes No

Do the residents appear happy and engaged? Yes No

Does the facility appear clean? Yes No

Do you smell urine or strong deodorizers that may be covering up the smell of urine? Yes No

**Community environment** (Continued)

May residents bring personal items from home? Yes No

Is there a secured outside area for the residents to walk in? Yes No

**Community services**

What types of services are available? (For example: activities, personal care, snacks.)

What kinds of meals are normally served, and when?

Can they accommodate special dietary needs? Yes No

What type of help is available at mealtime?

Is there visitor parking? Yes No

Is there a security system? Yes No

Are there bed alarms? Yes No

Is there an emergency response system? Yes No

**Health and medical care**

Is there a written plan for the care of each resident and is there an ongoing process for assessing changing needs? Yes No

What type of health care and personal care services are available?

What is the protocol for contacting family members when health issues arise?

Who is the contact when the family has questions about patient care?

How are emergencies handled after hours?

**Health and medical care** (Continued)

Is there an on-site pharmacy? Yes No

Are residents required to purchase prescriptions from the on-site pharmacy? Yes No

Is there someone on staff to help arrange doctor appointments? Yes No

Are there doctors on site? If so, are they specialists? Yes No

Lead time to be seen?

Is there a social worker on staff for help with care and resources? Yes No

What happens if there is a short-term need for hospitalization?

How often do residents return to the residence after a stay at rehab or a hospital?

**Dedicated memory care**

Does the facility have a special wing or floor for residents with dementia or cognitive impairment? Yes No

What type of training has the staff received in caring for patients with dementia or cognitive impairment?  
Who does the training?

How does the staff handle behaviors such as wandering and agitation?

What security measures are in place to keep residents with dementia or cognitive impairment from wandering out of the building?

Is the staff available 24 hours a day? Yes No

Who makes the final call about a long-term move to memory care?

### Memory care (Continued)

For facilities without specific memory care units, what training has the staff received to care for people with memory-related issues?

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Who is the contact when the family has questions about patient care?

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### Activities and amenities

How are new residents welcomed to the community?

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What types of activities and events are offered?

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Is there a central community room for activities and events?

Yes No

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### Staff

Is the staff available 24 hours a day?

Yes No

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Is the staff friendly, respectful and personable?

Yes No

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What is the ratio of staff to residents?

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What is the staffing level on weekdays, weekends and evenings?

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What is the staff turnover rate?

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### Contract and fees

What are the monthly fees and what is included? (Ask to see the care agreement/service contract.)

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Is there a different fee for memory care?

Yes No

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If a service is not covered, what is the fee for that service(s)?

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**Contract and fees** (Continued)

By what percentage have the monthly fees increased over each of the last five years?

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What happens if a resident can no longer cover their monthly fees?

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What would make the facility discharge a resident?

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What dispute procedures are in place?

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What is the state rating and incident report?

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Is the facility Medicaid certified?

Yes No

Do not hesitate to ask any facility that you visit what kind of procedures and inspection policies they have in place to ensure patients are safe and receive a good quality of care.

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Check with local regulatory agencies and the Better Business Bureau to confirm compliance and see if any complaints have been filed.

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 **Resources**

Each state's Department of Health Services conducts an annual inspection of each skilled nursing facility in the state.

The results are posted on the Internet at the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services website at [www.cms.gov](http://www.cms.gov), and they should also be posted at the facility for your review. The reports will show how each facility's care and safety record compares to state and national averages for quality of care.



