

NURSING HOMES & ASSISTED LIVING CENTERS

When a person is no longer able to live independently, a nursing home might become an option. Federal law provides for an assessment of the individual's health and social needs when the individual is admitted to a nursing home. The assessment is conducted by a nursing facility social worker. The worker will prepare an individual care plan. If appropriate, a referral will be made to state programs and other community resources so that the person can remain at home. If a family member needs to be placed in a nursing home, you will need to choose a home that best fits your family member's needs. Begin the process of choosing by selecting a few homes in your area. You can also ask for recommendations from friends who have family in nursing homes. Your family physician might also be a good resource.

You should visit each nursing home personally before making a decision. Pay attention to the details while you are there, and be sure to ask lots of questions. Some things you'll want to take note of include:

- Are the residents clean and involved in activities?
- Are outings planned?
- Are church services planned?
- How often do they see others from the community?
- What is the staff per resident ratio? Are the staff within sight of the residents?
- Are the rooms clean and private?
- Do residents appear well-nourished?
- How long have the nurse's aides been working there? A high turnover rate is a bad sign.
- How are medical emergencies handled and how far away is the nearest hospital?
- Does it appear restraints or sedatives have been overused?
- Do the current residents of the home like or dislike the facility? Why?

Those tips will give you a good start in choosing a nursing home. But, before you make a final decision, read the contracts and policies carefully. Discuss payment options and make all necessary arrangements. Contact the Department of Health at 605-773-3361, and ask about the home's compliance with state regulations.

SOUTH DAKOTA OFFICE OF ATTORNEY GENERAL

**CONSUMER
PROTECTION**

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This handout is for informational purposes and should not be construed as legal advice or as a policy of the South Dakota Attorney General. If you need advice on a particular issue, you should consult a private attorney or other experts.

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The Office of Adult Services and Aging also has an Ombudsman Program. The program receives and investigates complaints made on behalf of residents of long-term care facilities. The Ombudsman is an advocate for the individual and provides information and assistance to residents and their families. They can be reached at 1-866-854-5465.

ASSISTED LIVING CENTERS

Assisted living is a residential alternative that promotes maximum independence for each resident through a combination of supportive services and assistance.

Each assisted living center may vary in size, style and optional services. According to South Dakota Law, any health care facility or related institution for the care of people, including assisted living, must obtain a license from the Department of Health. This would not include those residences that only offer room and board. Assisted living centers are intended to be an alternative for individuals who do not need 24-hour nursing care, but do need a combination of housing and assistance. Questions to ask when considering an assisted living center:

- Do the residents appear to be well attended?
- Is the assisted living center clean and odor free?
- Does there appear to be adequate staff for the number of residents?
- Can a resident bring their personal furniture or belongings?
- Are there activities, individual or group, offered at the center?
- Does the resident have privacy during family visits?
- Would the center consider a short-term stay for a trial period?

When trying to choose the right assisted living center, there are many things to consider. If you need more information contact Adult Services and Aging at 605-773-3656 or 1-866-854-5465.