Questions and Resources to Decide Whether a Nursing Home is the Right Fit

Questions families should ask when meeting the director of a nursing home:

- Does the care meet the needs of your family? Does the facility have proper medical services? Can residents personalize their rooms with photographs and other items? Are staff members interacting one-on-one with residents? Is the staff smiling and welcoming?
- Does the facility have adequate fire and safety systems? The most recent state inspection report will show if it had deficiencies related to fire drills, up-to-date manuals and policies, or expired fire extinguishers. A fire marshal report should be posted at each facility.
- Does it have a wanderer alert? These devices are used to make sure a disoriented resident doesn't leave the residence.
- Does it have a pastoral care program of any kind? Such programs suggest the homes are connected to the community and that they value all dimensions of the residents' lives.
- Does it have a volunteer program, and if so, what do those volunteers do? These programs indicate "fresh air in the facility."
- What is the policy on chemical and physical restraints? Obviously, the fewer the better/
- How frequently do patients get pressure ulcers? Such injuries occur when an individual stays in one position for too long and the skin in contact with the bed or other surface begins to break down. Again, the fewer the better. This is listed under a home's quality report on Nursing Home Compare.
- What is the medical direction model? This explains what kind of care the facility specializes in providing, i.e., subacute, Alzheimer's, for the developmentally disabled. Ideally, many of the patients at a facility would need similar kinds of care.
- What are the weight loss numbers like? All homes will have some, but they should not be substantial. This is listed under the quality report on Nursing Home Compare.
- Does the facility have a resident or family satisfaction survey, and if so, will they show you the results? Good facilities will be transparent.

Helpful resources in choosing a home:

- Nursing Home Compare offers a consumer guide to choosing a home at www.medicare.gov/nhcompare.
- The AARP provides 10 tips for selecting a home at www.aarpmagazine.org/health/embedded_sb.html. It also offers a nursing home checklist at http://assets.aarp.org/www.aarp.org_/promotions/text/life/NursingHomeChecklist.pdf.
- The National Citizen's Coalition for Quality Long-Term Care provides a consumer fact sheet on choosing long-term care at http://www.nccnhr.org/sites/default/files/advocate/A-Consumer-Guide-To-Choosing-A-Nursing-Home.pdf.
- State inspection records can be located at the California Department of Public Health at cdph.ca.gov.

• And a nursing home rating system is located at the California HealthCare Foundation site at www.calnhs.org.

For a free consultation for questions or concerns you have regarding the care that an elderly loved one is receiving at a nursing home or other type of elder care facility, call *Berman & Riedel, LLP* today at (858) 350-8855. Our staff will gladly discuss with you what rights you may have under California and federal law. To learn more about *Berman & Riedel, LLP*'s elder abuse and neglect law practice, visit the firm's main website at www.preventelderabuse.com.