

Memory Moment

Navigating the Maze of Long-term Care

By Shannon Nosbisch, CDP, DCS

You have done everything you can to keep your loved one at home, but it is time to look for a long-term care facility. What do you look for? What type of long-term care facility are there? What is best for your loved one?

Jackie Witges, Certified Dementia Practitioner and former Geriatric Care Manager, has done presentations on this subject for Effingham Area Alzheimer's Awareness for several years. Last year in March 2021, we recorded her presentation. You can find the link on our website at www.effinghamalz.org homepage. I will touch on the basics in this article, but for more in-depth information, go to our website.

You want to select a long-term care facility that matches the needs of your loved one – their values and needs. To determine their needs, list what they need help with during the day – dressing, medications, eating, bathing, etc. Can they talk, see and hear well? Can they get in and out of a car? How mobile are they?

Your goal is quality care that maximizes the quality of life. Decisions should mirror the beliefs, values and wishes of your loved one! That is why you need to have a talk early, not when you **have** to.

In Jackie's presentation, she describes a variety of long-term care facilities using the language below. You may also hear other terms such as 'independent living facilities', 'skilled nursing facilities', or 'assisted living memory care'. There are a lot of different terms used to describe these facilities. It's important to remember to use the questions above on your loved one's needs and values to ask staff if this facility is the right fit for your loved one. Here are the types of long-term care facilities:

Assisted Living – A resident is fairly independent but can't live alone. Meals, laundry, housekeeping and socialization is usually provided by the facility. Help with medications can be provided and they may have nurses part-time or on call.

Supportive living – Can occur in assisted living facilities, but Medicaid assistance is needed for cost.

Memory Care/Dementia Care – These facilities provide more hands-on care for bathing, toileting and eating assistance. Most have a nurse on staff 24/7 or 12-15 hours/day or on call.

Nursing Home/Rehab – These facilities have skilled rehab or long-term custodial care.

What to do to check out a long-term care facility:

1. Do in-person visits, scheduled and unscheduled, to the long-term care facilities you are interested in.
2. Talk with residents and family members about their experience.
3. Use your eyes, ears and nose. Taste meals. Food may be a joy to your loved one. Make sure it tastes good. Ask if you can bring some meals in.
4. Talk with staff. Ask about the turnover. With Covid, realize that staffing is an issue with all facilities!

Questions to ask:

What plans do they have in place if Covid affects staff or residents? Is there an additional charge for PPE for staff? What are their isolation plans?

What are the visitor requirements? Is there a time limit or do we have to schedule visits?

What is included in the monthly or daily fee? Are personal products and incontinence products provided?

Who administers medications?

Are amenities like phone, cable TV, Internet included in fees?

Below are some websites that may help you in selecting a long-term care facility.

Medicare Certified Home Health – <http://www.medicare.gov/HCCCompare>

Nursing Homes –

<http://health.usnews.com/best-nursing-homes>

<http://www.ucomparehealthcare.com/nhs/illinois>

<http://www.medicare.gov/NHCompare>

Surveys from IL Department of Public Health –

<https://ltc.dph.illinois.gov/webapp/LTCApp/ltac.jsp>

Payment for long-term care can be private pay – where a check is written every month. Some people may have insurance policies that may help pay for long term care or long-term care insurance. Review and know what the policies entail. There are many different coverages! Medicare will pay for rehab after an illness or crisis, short-term skilled home health nurses, therapists and/or aides, if eligible but not long-term care. Depending on finances, Medicaid may pay for long-term care stays. Watch the video at www.effinghamalz.org for more information on payment options and in-depth discussion.

Transitioning your loved one to a long-term care home is not an easy decision. Finding the right fit for your loved one can make the transition easier for everyone.

Effingham Area Alzheimer's Awareness (EAAA) is a volunteer-run, not-for-profit organization founded to provide education and support to all families, caregivers, and people with Alzheimer's disease and related dementia in Effingham County and the surrounding area. For more information about Effingham Area Alzheimer's Awareness, check out the website at www.effinghamalz.org. If you are a caregiver & have specific questions or situations you would like information on, please feel free to call Shannon Nosbisch at 217-663-0010 or Amy Sobrino at 618-363-8372.