



Information about The New Five-Star Quality Rating System for Nursing Homes

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has improved information on the Nursing Home Compare website to help individuals, family members, caregivers, and the public find and compare the quality of nursing homes more easily. Visit <http://www.medicare.gov/NHCompare> for more information.

Overview of the Five-Star Nursing Home Quality Rating System

The Nursing Home Compare website now features a system that assigns each nursing home a rating between one and five stars. Nursing homes with five stars are considered to have above average quality compared to other nursing homes in that state. Nursing homes with one star have quality much below the average in that state (but the nursing home still meets Medicare's minimum requirements).

There is an overall five-star rating for each nursing home. This rating is based on the star ratings for three separate categories: 1) health inspections, 2) quality measures, and 3) staffing levels. These three categories are described below:

1) Health Inspections – The health inspection rating contains information from the last three years of onsite inspections, including both annual visits and any complaint investigation findings. Inspectors visit each nursing home and collect specific information to determine whether a nursing home meets Medicare's minimum requirements for safety and quality of care.

2) Quality Measures – This rating is based on ten different physical and clinical measures for nursing home residents, such as the percent of residents with pressure ulcers, the percent of residents with moderate to severe pain, or the percent of residents who have changes in their ability to move about. This information is collected by the nursing home on all residents and shows how well nursing homes care for their residents' physical and clinical needs.

3) Staffing Information – This rating includes information about the average number of hours of care given by nursing staff to each resident each day. This rating considers differences in the level of care residents in different nursing homes need. For example, a nursing home that has residents with more severe needs would be expected to have more nursing staff than a nursing home where the needs aren't as high.

Nursing Home Compare Has More Information

Alternatives to Nursing Home Care: If you or a family member need help with daily activities like eating, bathing or dressing, you may first want to consider community resources before looking into nursing home care. Many communities offer assistance with these types of activities in your own home. Visit Nursing Home Compare for more information about alternatives to nursing home care and a list of contacts.

Follow These Steps to Finding a Nursing Home:

Step 1: Visit Nursing Home Compare to find a nursing home in your area. Search by nursing home name, city, county, state or ZIP code.

Step 2: Use the information on Nursing Home Compare to compare the quality of the nursing homes you're considering. You may want to compare the Five-Star Quality ratings and other important quality information.

Step 3: Visit the nursing homes you're considering or have someone visit for you.

Step 4: Choose the nursing home that best meets your needs. Talk to your doctor or other healthcare practitioner, your family, friends, or others. Contact state agencies, such as the Long-Term Care Ombudsman or the State Survey Agency to get more information. Their phone numbers are listed on Nursing Home Compare.

Next Steps

CMS is interested in making additional changes the Nursing Home Compare website in several areas such as adding more quality measures, and including more information about nursing home characteristics and resident satisfaction.

We want to hear from you! To share your comments about the Five-Star ratings and ideas about how we can improve the Nursing Home Compare website, please e-mail us at BetterCare@cms.hhs.gov.

Additional Resources

To view or print Medicare's Guide to Choosing a Nursing Home, visit <http://www.medicare.gov/Publications/Pubs/pdf/02174.pdf>.

To view or print the Nursing Home Checklist (to take with you when you visit the nursing home) visit <http://www.medicare.gov/Nursing/Checklist.pdf>.

You can also call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) to order a free copy. TTY users should call 1-877-486-2048.

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