

SPECIAL REPORT

**The 9 Questions You Must
Ask If You or a Loved
One is Going
Into a Nursing Home**

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The decision to place yourself or a family member into a nursing home is one of the most difficult decisions you may ever be asked to make. That is why it is important, if that time comes, to have a plan and to know what questions to ask.

In a perfect world, you would have plenty of time to visit the nursing homes, talk to the residents, meet the care staff, and sample the food and so on. Unfortunately, we do not live in a perfect world. Often decisions have to be made quickly and without a lot of information or comparisons.

**Our Mission at Nale Law Offices
Is to Help Our Clients**

- Find the right nursing home
- Get the best care there
- Pay for it without going broke

In order to accomplish all of this, we use a systematic approach to learn about you, your wants, needs, and preferences. Once we have gathered sufficient information, then we are able to rank virtually every nursing home in Maine (based on Federal and State investigation reports and other data) to find the nursing homes which can meet your needs. But that is just the start.

Next, you need to know what questions to ask to make an informed choice. Here are some of the basic things to consider:

1. Is a nursing home necessary or are there alternatives?

In my entire practice as an Elder Law attorney, I've never once had a client say they were looking forward to going into a nursing home. Yet, often there are alternatives that people simply don't know about. Talk to your physician, social workers, and other professionals to see if there is assisted living, home health care, or other alternatives for you.

2. How do I find the right nursing home?

The best way is to take a systematic approach like we discussed earlier. If this isn't possible, at the very least, shop around. Personally visit each nursing home you are considering (make unannounced visits) and ask for recommendations.

3. Once I find the right nursing home, how can I get in?

Surviving the admissions process isn't always easy. Be up front with the nursing home's admissions director, be prepared to tell them all about your situation, including finances, and be prepared to negotiate.

4. Who will pay for my care, me, Medicare, MaineCare?

Again, it depends upon your personal situation and knowledge of this difficult area of law. You also have to be sure to take advantage of the special protections available for your spouse, if he or she will not also be in the nursing home. A good Elder Law attorney can help you through this entire process.

5. Can they make my kids pay for my care?

Not if you handle the admissions process properly. Just be careful not to sign everything that's put in front of you without a thorough understanding of all the documents.

6. Once I get in, how can I get the best care there?

The key here is to have a proper care plan in place. That's a plan developed by the nursing home staff professionals (and you) to determine exactly what kind of care you'll get. Putting a proper care plan in place is perhaps the most important step you can take... the care plan is part of your contract. If you feel you can't be the best advocate for yourself, then it's important to get help from an Elder Law attorney or a geriatric care manager or another health professional.

7. Can I be moved around the facility, from room to room, once I'm admitted?

There are several protections for you under Federal and state law. Oftentimes, people are moved without proper notice, and even without proper authority. Spend some time learning about your rights as a resident, or work with someone who will be an advocate for you.

8. What are the nursing home's duties to me?

Ask them for a copy of their duties under the Nursing Home Reform Act. Because of a previous history of inadequate care, in the late 1980's Congress passed laws which outlined the minimum standards for health, safety, and resident rights... but it's necessary that you take the time to do so.

If you'd like, contact us and we can send you further information on your rights as a nursing home resident.

9. Is there someone who can help me with all of this?

You can get help from many professionals... from an Elder Law attorney to a geriatric care manager, to social workers. Be sure to deal with a professional who understands the broad range of issues that arise when you or a loved one goes into a nursing home. For instance, at Nale Law Offices, we're dedicated to helping you find the right nursing home, getting the best care there, and showing you how to pay for it without going broke.

We offer a variety of services from the most basic educational information and computer analyses to comprehensive legal services, review of admissions agreement and care plan representation, all the way through "length of stay" representation. You choose what, if any, service you want and we price our fees accordingly. And, we always tell you up front exactly what it will cost.

If you'd like further information, please call Nale Law Offices. Our phone number is (207)873-4304.