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FIVE STEPS TO PROTECTING YOUR LOVED ONES FROM NURSING HOME NEGLIGENCE

1. Research and Tour Several Nursing Homes

- Take advantage of the information provided from the internet and government agencies to educate yourself with what to look for in a nursing home, and then take a tour. Find out when it was built and if it has been modernized.
- Ask for a copy of the latest state survey of the nursing home. Medicare requires such copies be available upon request.
- Talk to your friends and relatives who have had loved ones in a nursing home. They can probably give you a good recommendation.
- Ask about the staffing levels for doctors, nurses, and assistants at the nursing home for each shift and if it differentiates due to nights, weekends, or holidays.
- Visit the nursing home at night or on the weekend when staffing levels are typically lower.
- Find out about the meals and who assists the residents if they are unable to feed themselves.

2. Assist in the Preparation of a “Plan of Care”

- A “Plan of Care” tailored specifically to the nursing home resident is required by federal law. The family must be consulted when designing the plan. Family members are more in touch with the needs of the patient. Family members should routinely check up on their loved one to ensure that the plan is being adhered to by nursing home staff.
- Plans should detail diet, fluid intake, exercise, contain a list of all current prescription drugs and a list of emergency contacts.
- Plans should address specific medical concerns and/or limitations and provide for any required special medical, safety or warning devices.

3. Monitor Your Loved One

- Visit frequently and at different times of the day and week. Check daily for any incident reports. Make sure there is adequate supervision.

- Talk to the doctor to be informed of medical treatment and talk to the nurses and aides to learn of issues affecting your loved one.
- Call the nursing home director about any concerns, problems, or complaints. Any complaints or specific instructions should be put in writing with a copy kept with your records.

4. Watch for Signs of Neglect

- Physically the resident should be kept clean, properly hydrated and fed meals three times per day.
- Be suspicious of weight loss and unexplained injuries. All serious injuries should be thoroughly investigated.
- Medically, check for infections, bed sores, unexplained changes in medication, or medical treatment.
- Take photographs and document all details in writing at the first sign or suspicion of abuse or neglect.

5. Know Your Loved One's Rights

- Get a copy of the applicable federal and state regulations as to the minimum standard for care.
- Obtain a copy of the nursing home's policies, procedures, rules and regulations, and most recent state survey report.
- Investigate the existing security provisions to protect the resident from harm by other residents. Are they providing care for any potentially dangerous residents?
- Consult with an attorney who concentrates in this area of law.