

Medicare and You

Choosing A Nursing Home

(NAPSA)—About 3 million Americans depend on nursing homes at some point during each year to provide lifesaving care. How can you best choose the nursing home that is right for you or a loved one? Medicare's Nursing Home Compare Web site, of course!

Nursing Home Compare at www.medicare.gov/NHCompare provides quality ratings for each of the nation's 16,000 nursing homes. Each facility is rated from a low of one star to a high of five based on quality of care measures.

Consulting with a panel of experts from academia, patient advocacy and nursing home provider groups, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) developed the rating system based on a nursing home's performance in three critical areas:

- How a facility performed on its health inspection surveys over time;
- How the nursing home scored on a set of quality measures; and
- What staffing levels the nursing home maintains.

A five-star designation means the facility rates "much above average"; four stars indicates "above average"; three means "about average"; two is a "below average" rating, with one star indicating that a facility rates "much below average." The ratings, created by CMS, are updated quarterly.

Making Informed Decisions

"Because conditions within a nursing home can change, this sys-

tem is not intended to be the only tool caregivers can use in selecting the right nursing facility for a loved one," said Kerry Weems, CMS acting administrator.

Weems adds that in addition to visiting the site before selecting a facility, people should:

- Consult with their physician;
- Talk to the state's nursing home ombudsman;
- Talk to the state's survey and certification office;
- Visit the nursing home.

Finding Care Options

To learn more about all care options, visit www.medicare.gov/caregivers. The site has information about in-home services, nursing homes and alternatives to nursing homes.

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www.medicare.gov
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A new Web site lets people compare quality ratings for each of the nation's 16,000 nursing homes.