

# 3 Steps to Finding the Right 'Fit'



## A Checklist for Assessing Long Term Care Homes

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At the Ontario Long Term Care Association (OLTCA) we understand that not many people prepare for long term care until illness or other circumstances thrusts the decision upon them. When that time comes the decision over the right long term care home often has to be made in a short time period when there is increased stress and charged emotions.

As you begin to make that decision, knowing what questions to ask is as important as knowing how to deal with the answers and information that you collect. The important thing is to ask the questions that are important to you and your situation and to get the information that has personal meaning and relevance for you. The following checklist has been designed to help you with this process. It is based on the experience and expertise of our members who assist individuals and families in finding the right 'fit' several thousand times each year.

## Step 1 - Getting Started, Making Your List

The first step is recognizing that you, or your family member, have a unique combination of care needs and comfort preferences. The objective is to find the home that can best respond to these. A good place to start is by making a list of your individual needs and preferences. Some of these will have a higher priority for you than others and you need to identify these as part of the process. The following questions can assist you in building your list.

### Care Philosophy

- + What is important to me about the way a home provides care?
- + How important is it that I actively participate in care planning?
- + What do I need to be reassured if I am unable to actively participate in care planning?
- + How would I like to be kept informed?
- + How important is choice to me (e.g. will the home let me try and walk or restrict me because I might fall?)

### Direct Care

- + What specific care and support do I need?
- + What types of staff are required to deliver this care and support?

### Daily Living

- + What types of foods do I like or dislike?
- + What types of activities interest me?
- + Do I like to participate in small groups, large groups?
- + How important is it for me to have a choice in what I do?

### Special Needs

- + What cultural supports are important to me?
- + What spiritual supports are important to me?

## Physical Surroundings & Atmosphere

✚ What types of things make me comfortable and feel at home?

## Confidence and Peace of Mind

✚ What would make me worry less about my care and safety?

### Remember

Often there is a high degree of anxiety and guilt for you and your family members over both the physical and emotional separation that is about to take place. Now is the time to consider how you can best address this. This might involve considerations like the location of the home and how it can be accessed by others. You should consider other supports that a home might have in place like access to email, family activities and events, etc.

## Step 2 – Contacting Prospective Homes

When you have your list, you are ready to begin contacting homes to see how they match up. We strongly recommend that you do this by contacting the home and arranging for a tour. The personal visit will give you a personal ‘feel’ for the home that will add to the information and data that you collect. If you do not have a list of homes, you can follow the links on our web site [www.oltca.com](http://www.oltca.com). Look under the *Learn More About...LTC and LTC Homes* link and search our member directory for individual homes and contact information. Once you have made your list, you are ready to call and make appointments. If you have a longer list of potential homes you can also use the checklist to narrow your search by pre-screening based on your top priorities.

## Step 3 - Compiling and Comparing Information

The checklist provides a set of suggested questions that you can ask as well as room for you to record the answers and your comments. Space is also provided for you to add your own questions on items that are specific to your personal situation, e.g. specific medical conditions. The resource section at the end of the document may assist you in understanding what specific supports you should be looking for with respect to medical conditions such as Alzheimer’s, stroke, etc.

You can use a separate copy of the checklist for each home on your list. Once you have completed collecting your information, you can then compare the results to help you determine the best fit for you and your individual circumstances.

# The Checklist

Home: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Date(s) Called: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Visited: \_\_\_\_\_

People I Spoke to:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Position</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

The Things I am Looking For	Yes	No	Comment
<b>- Care Philosophy -</b>			
I received or read a copy of a mission statement.			
There is a clear process for residents/families to participate in care planning and delivery.			
There is a clear process for residents/families to participate in home life decisions.			
There is a clear process for contacting family members in the event of emergencies.			
The home's policies on the following items were clearly explained to me: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abuse</li> <li>• Use of restraints</li> <li>• Cardiopulmonary resuscitation</li> <li>• Medications</li> <li>• Other _____</li> </ul>			
Residents have choices about such things as showers vs. baths, bed times, participating in activities, dressing for breakfast etc.			
There are restrictions on visits by family members and others.			
There is a Residents Council.			
There is a Family Council.			
Married couples are housed together.			
The home has a volunteer program.			
There is a clearly defined process for registering and resolving complaints.			



<b>The Things I am Looking For</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Comment</b>
There are clear examples of where the home is part of the community.			
<i>Other Things I Need to Know About the Home's Care Philosophy</i>			
<b>- Direct Care Services -</b>			
There is a physician on call 24 hours a day.			
The Medical Director is a geriatrician or has considerable experience in geriatric care.			
I can continue receiving care from my family doctor.			
The home has experience in responding to my specific medical needs.			
The home identified specific staff skills, programs and/or equipment that relate to my specific care and support needs.			
The home provided specific examples of partnerships with hospitals and other professional resources in the community that relate to my care and support needs.			
The home has access to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dentist and dental hygienists</li> <li>• Physiotherapists</li> <li>• Occupational Therapists</li> <li>• Social workers</li> <li>• Others _____</li> </ul>			
<i>Other Things I Need to Know About the Home's Ability to Meet My Care and Support Needs</i>			
<b>- Daily Living -</b>			
The home serves the foods that I like to eat.			
The home serves food in a manner that I can eat, e.g. chopped, and pureed.			
The home provides assistance to help me eat.			
The menu is varied.			
The home provides seasonal foods.			

<b>The Things I am Looking For</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Comment</b>
The home provides food and meals that are important to my culture and/or religion.			
I am confident I would never go hungry regardless of the time of day.			
My family members or guests are welcome to dine with me.			
The cost for my family members or guests to dine with me is reasonable.			
There is flexibility in my meal times.			
The home demonstrated a varied list of resident activities.			
The home provides activities which interest me.			
The home provides activities that are suited to, and support, my individual capabilities.			
I have a choice of participating in any activities.			
The home provides resident access to e-mail and other on-line services.			
<i>Other Things I Need to Know that Would Help Me Decide That I would Like Living Here</i>			
<b>- My Special Needs -</b>			
The home is able to communicate with me in my language.			
The home offers access to personal grooming services e.g. hair dresser, that I am used to.			
There are other residents in the home who have similar cultural practices.			
The home is able to meet my spiritual needs.			
<i>Other Things I Need to Know to be Satisfied that the Home can Meet My Special Needs</i>			



<b>The Things I am Looking For</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<b>- Physical Surroundings &amp; Atmosphere -</b>			
The residents appear to be well groomed.			
The residents appear to be active and engaged.			
The residents appear appropriately dressed for the time of day.			
The residents appear friendly/happy/content.			
Residents with obvious special needs appeared to be well cared for.			
Staff are friendly and welcoming.			
Staff appear to be focused on providing care and attention to residents.			
There is evidence that resident privacy is respected.			
Staff appear to know what they were doing.			
There are no strange odors or smells.			
The noise level is pleasant.			
I felt welcomed as soon as I entered the home.			
It was obvious that life in the home was organized, yet relaxed.			
The home is clean and looks to be in good physical condition.			
There is ample room for residents.			
I can have a place to have a private conversation.			
I can have a place for quiet time to myself if I want to.			
My bathroom is accessible and clean.			
I can easily call for help from my bed if I need it.			
There is room to store my things.			
I can bring in furniture and other things that make me comfortable.			
The common areas are bright and inviting.			
Home equipment, wheelchairs etc. appear to be in good working order.			
I am confident that I will be made aware of events and happenings in the home.			
I would be comfortable in the dining room.			
I can easily move about within the home.			
<i>Other Things I Need to Know That Would Help Me be Comfortable Here</i>			



<b>The Things I am Looking For</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<b>- Confidence and Peace of Mind -</b>			
The home provided me with a copy of their latest Compliance and Inspection Reports and explained everything to my satisfaction.			
The home provided me with a full understanding of their safety procedures including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resident valuables</li> <li>• Home entry and access</li> <li>• Secure areas</li> <li>• Fire</li> <li>• Emergency</li> </ul>			
I am confident that I can make a complaint without fear of reprisal.			
I am confident that I will get the care I need.			
The Inspection Reports and Resident Bill of Rights are posted in a publicly accessible area.			
I felt my questions were answered in a forthright manner.			
The home volunteered information for things that I didn't even think about.			
<i>Other Things I Need to Know to Give Me Confidence and Peace of Mind</i>			
<b>- Maintaining My Relationships -</b>			
The home's location allows my friends and family to visit easily.			
The home provides services and actively supports me in being able to still participate in family events.			
The home has policies and processes to maintain regular contact with my family.			
<i>Other Things that Would Make Me Feel That I Can Still Be Part of My Family</i>			

## Additional Resources for Care & Services

Various medical and physical conditions require access to different types of care programs, professional expertise and services. The following are a list of resources that you may wish to consult to further enable you to ask the right questions with respect to your own situation.

### **Alzheimer Society of Ontario**

Tel: (416) 967-5900 Fax: (416)967-3826  
General e-mail: [staff@alzheimeront.org](mailto:staff@alzheimeront.org)  
Website: <http://alzheimerontario.org>

### **Canadian Cancer Society Ontario Division**

Tel. (416) 488-5400 or Toll-free at 1 800 268-8874  
Fax: (416) 488-2872 Website: [www.cancer.ca](http://www.cancer.ca)

### **Canadian Center for Addictions & Mental Health**

Queen Street Site  
Tel: (416) 535-8501 Website: [www.camh.net](http://www.camh.net)

### **Canadian Mental Health Association**

Tel: (416) 484-7750 Fax: (416) 484-4617  
General e-mail Inquiries: [info@cmha.ca](mailto:info@cmha.ca)  
Website: [www.cmha.ca](http://www.cmha.ca)

### **Dementia Networks**

*c/o Alzheimer Society of Ontario*  
Contact Alzheimer Society of Ontario to find your local *Dementia Network Office*  
Tel: (416) 967-5900 Fax: (416)967-3826  
URL Address: [Local Dementia Networks in Ontario](#)

### **Canadian Diabetes Association**

Local Tel. (416) 363-0177 Toll Free: 1-800-226-8464 Fax: (416) 408-7117  
Website: [www.diabetes.ca](http://www.diabetes.ca)

### **Kidney Foundation of Canada Central Ontario Branch**

Tel.: (416) 445-0373 Fax: (416) 445-7440  
Website: [www.kidneycob.on.ca](http://www.kidneycob.on.ca)

### **The Canadian Continence Foundation**

Tel: (514) 488-8379 Toll free Tel: 1-800-265-9575  
General help e-mail: [help@continence-fdn.ca](mailto:help@continence-fdn.ca)  
Website: [www.continence-fdn.ca](http://www.continence-fdn.ca)

### **Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario**

Tel: (416) 489-7111 Fax (416) 489-6885  
Website: [ww2.heartandstroke.ca](http://ww2.heartandstroke.ca)

### **The Mood Disorders Association of Ontario**

Tel: (416)486-8046 Toll-free:1-888-486-8236  
Fax: (416)486-8127  
Website: [www.mooddisorders.on.ca](http://www.mooddisorders.on.ca)

### **Parkinson Society Canada National Office**

Tel: 416-227-9700 Toll Free: 1-800-565-3000  
Fax: 416-227-9600  
General Email: [General.info@parkinson.ca](mailto:General.info@parkinson.ca)  
Website: [www.parkinson.ca](http://www.parkinson.ca)

### **Regional Geriatric Programs of Ontario**

*5 locations offering specialized geriatric services, education and research*  
*To find a location near you*  
Website: [www.rgps.on.ca](http://www.rgps.on.ca)