



Friends of St. John the Caregiver

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From *A Catholic Guide to Caring for Your Aging Parent*
by Monica Dodds
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Evaluating Housing Options: How to Begin

It's always best to plan ahead but that's not always possible. Often there's a need for an immediate placement.

Many housing options are available for seniors. At one end of the spectrum is an independent living facility with residents in private apartments. This facility may provide a common dining area and basic housekeeping but no other services. An assisted-living facility has the same amenities, but a resident also has access to personal care assistance, such as help with bathing, dressing, and managing medication. The most extensive services are offered in a nursing home, where the residents are no longer able to be independent and need medical care. A first step is to determine which housing option best suits your loved one's needs.

Before you visit a facility, do some research:

- Contact the state ombudsman to ask for a copy of the latest review of the facility's license.
- Find out if the facility is for-profit or nonprofit.
- Find out if it is owned by an individual or a corporation.
- Find out where its home office and any other properties are located.

Use checklists for evaluating an assisted-living facility or a nursing home. Print several copies of the appropriate checklist so that you can use a separate one for each facility you visit. It's best to visit each site more than once and to make your appointments at different times on different days to get a more accurate idea of how the facility is run. (For example, on-duty staff size may vary at different times of the day.)

Because there are many items to consider, take the time to review the checklist before you make your visit.

As you tour the facility with the admissions or marketing director (or other staff member), spend a few moments looking at your list to see if you missed something. Remember that you don't want to make any decisions on the spot and you can always call and ask questions after you get home. Ask for a copy of the facility's monthly calendar, activity schedule, and resident contract. Review these materials at home.

For more free information, visit YourAgingParent.com, a program of the Friends of St. John the Caregiver.

To receive a free copy of "The Little Book of Caregiver Prayers," send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: Friends of St. John the Caregiver, P.O. Box 320, Mountlake Terrace, WA 98043.