



# Guidelines for Choosing a Personal Care Home



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Know before you go. The Facts of Georgia's Health Care.

Selecting a personal care home for yourself, a friend or family member can be a difficult task. This tool was designed to assist you in making your personal care home decisions. These guidelines will provide you and your family members with a variety of resources to aid you in making your personal care home choice.

A personal care home is any dwelling that provides or arranges for the provision of housing, food service, and one or more personal services for two or more adults who are not related to the owner or administrator by blood or marriage. Personal services include but are not limited to individual assistance with self-administered medications and essential activities of daily living such as eating, bathing, grooming, dressing and toileting.

A personal care home is not licensed to provide medical or nursing care, so persons requiring continuous medical or nursing services are generally not appropriate to live in a personal care home.

A physician will need to evaluate the potential resident to determine that a personal care home is an appropriate setting to meet the resident's needs before the resident can be admitted.

## Does the Facility Meet My Needs?

When selecting a personal care home, there are several steps that can be taken to assure that you are making the best possible choice:

- Choose a home close to family and friends
- Visit the homes being considered
- Inspect them very closely
- Ask questions
- Get in writing any costs, additional charges, required deposits and rules

The future resident, family and friends should then consider the resident's physical, emotional and financial needs and circumstances before making a final selection.

## Licensure

The Office of Regulatory Services (ORS) licenses personal care homes. The licensing requirements are minimum standards for items such as construction, staffing and diet.

Personal care homes in Georgia should have a license issued by ORS. However, some are not licensed. If you are considering a personal care home for yourself or for someone else, you should make sure that the home is licensed so that ORS will be able to investigate any complaints against the home. You can search for a personal care home in your geographic area on this Web site by going to the "Search for Care" application. You can also visit the ORS Web site at [ors.dhr.georgia.gov](http://ors.dhr.georgia.gov) where you will be able to see if the facility in question has the appropriate license.

## Regulations

ORS issues rules and regulations to establish standards for the licensing and operation of personal care homes. Contact the ORS Personal Care Home Program and/or Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program for additional information. See the last page for contact information.

After gathering information about the personal care home in your area, it is very important to make an appointment to visit the home and meet the administrator or manager. During your visit make sure you ask questions about their basic costs and services. At a later date, go back to the facility for an unannounced visit and closer inspection.

## Guidelines for Choosing a Personal Care Home, continued

### When Visiting a Facility Look for the Following:

**Licensing:** All facilities that provide personal care services are required to have a valid license or permit. The ORS permit and inspection reports should be displayed in a visible place on the premises. Ask to see the permit and inspection report. Is the license current? What is the home's licensed capacity? How many residents does the home have?

**Safety:** Make sure that stairways and hallways are well lighted and free of obstacles such as light cords, throw rugs, torn carpets and cracked tiles. Are there grab bars next to bathtubs, showers and toilets? Look for fire hazards, blocked fire doors and smoking restrictions that are ignored. Is there an adequate fire safety system that includes smoke and heat detectors? Is there a plan posted for quick evacuation in case of fire? Are the staff members and residents trained in fire safety?

**Cleanliness:** Does the home smell of urine or heavy cover-up deodorant? Check out window sills, counters and table tops for dust and dirt. Kitchens and residents' bathrooms must be clean.

**Meals:** Are special diets available? Ask to see a copy of the planned menus.

**Medications:** Who is responsible for initial acquisition and refilling of prescribed medications? Are medications stored under lock and key? Who supervises the medications?

**Pleasant Surroundings:** Flowers, pictures, seasonal decorations and general orderliness are all important in providing a happy and comfortable atmosphere for a resident.

**Activities Program:** Are there organized activities? What are they? Is there a regular schedule? What religious services are available? Regularly scheduled activities with participation encouraged by staff members can boost morale for residents.

**Morale:** Do staff members have a positive attitude toward the residents? Indifferent or sullen staff members can destroy morale. Do residents appear to be happy, interested and involved in what is going on? Take a good look at how the residents act and how they are dressed.

**Privacy and Respect:** Are residents afforded privacy and respect? Do staff members knock before entering a resident's room? Do staff members address residents by their names? Watch and talk to the staff members to get an idea of their attitudes towards their jobs and towards the residents. Actions of staff members reflect how the management or administration feels about the residents.

## Guidelines for Choosing a Personal Care Home, continued

### State Resources

#### Office of Regulatory Services

Department of Human Resources  
Personal Care Home Program  
2 Peachtree Street NW, 31st Floor  
Atlanta, GA 30303-3167  
(404) 657-4076  
(404) 657-5726 (complaints)  
(404) 657-5728 or  
(800) 878-6442

[dhr.state.ga.us](http://dhr.state.ga.us)

#### Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman

Department of Human Resources  
2 Peachtree Street NW, 9th Floor  
Atlanta, Ga 30303-3167  
(888) 454-5826

[georgiaombudsman.org](http://georgiaombudsman.org)

#### Legal Services Developer

Division of Aging Services  
Department of Human Resources  
2 Peachtree Street NW, 9th Floor  
Atlanta, GA 30303-3167  
(404) 657-5328

[aging.dhr.georgia.gov](http://aging.dhr.georgia.gov)

#### Office of Legal Services

Department of Human Resources  
2 Peachtree Street NW, 29th Floor  
Atlanta, GA 30303-3167  
(404) 656-4421

[dhr.state.ga.us](http://dhr.state.ga.us)

#### Senior Legal Hotline

(404) 657-9915  
(888) 257-9519

You can use the “Search For Care” application on the [georgiahealthinfo.gov](http://georgiahealthinfo.gov) Web site to find a personal care home in your area.

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Source: Office of Regulatory Services

Source: State Bar of Georgia