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# When is a house a home?

## Worksheet 8

Here are some simple guidelines and questions to help you evaluate the home-like quality of residential services.

### Whose house is it?

Are the individuals who live in the house the ones to determine its structure and tone or is the house geared to suit the staff hired to provide service?

For example, are there pictures and other personal mementos scattered throughout the house or are these personal items restricted to the individual's bedroom? Do the staff use their computers in the home as if they were working in an office?

Use your home and your own life as yardsticks for comparison. Do not accept, "well, it's better than where they were." Instead, ask yourself, "Is it as good as I have now?" and "Is it as good as I would want for myself?"

### Look around

Are there locks where they are not needed; that is, on the refrigerator, on the clothes closets, and so on?

Are there no locks where they are needed; that is, on bathroom doors, bedroom doors, filing cabinets, medicine cabinets, and so on?

Do people have the same amount and variety of possessions and personal articles as other people their age?

### What does it feel like?

Are the rooms comfortable? How about the couch? The chairs? Could you relax here? Does the place feel like a home?

### Take a moment to listen

Can you go somewhere for a little peace and quiet? Are there conversations among the people who live here?

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## Smell

Do you get a scent of homemade dinner on the stove or dessert in the oven, or do you smell institutional cleaners and odors?

## Taste

Would you enjoy the food that is served or would you merely tolerate it?

## Ask

What are the rules? Are they excessive or overly restrictive? Do they make sense to you? Who makes the rules?

## Infer

Do the people who live here experience a home with some added support, programming, and needed supervision? Or do they experience an institutional program with a few home-like qualities?

## Analyze

What compromises have been made in the name of budget limitations, programming practices, staff needs, and so on? In what ways do these compromises detract from a home-like atmosphere?

## Ask yourself

If an opening came up tomorrow, would I ask to move in?