

# THE CHICAGO REPORTER

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## Nursing Home Inequity

The Chicago Reporter investigated the quality and quantity of nursing homes where the majority of residents are black in Chicago, Illinois and the United States, compared with facilities where most of the residents are white. The Reporter found racial disparities on multiple fronts:

- Illinois has the highest number of poorly rated black nursing homes nationwide. There is just one excellent-rated black nursing home in the state, in south suburban Dolton.
- In Chicago, nearly 30 percent of nursing homes where the majority of residents are white were deemed excellent by the federal government. None of the city's black nursing homes earned that mark.
- A statistical analysis shows that poverty did not explain the disparities in Chicago.

For the full investigation and additional resources, go to [www.chicagoreporter.com](http://www.chicagoreporter.com).

## A story of neglect

The Chicago Police Department said it appeared to be a suicide. The Cook County Office of the Medical Examiner said it was an accident. But when 84-year-old Bennie Saxon fell four stories to his death on May 4 at a predominantly black South Side nursing home, a lawyer retained by his family said it could be neglect.

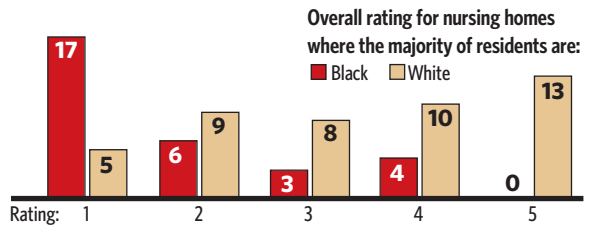
Saxon, who had dementia, had been living at Alden Wentworth Rehabilitation and Health Care Center at 201 W. 69th Street in the Greater Grand Crossing neighborhood for about four weeks before his fatal fall, family members said. His family has retained attorney Thomas H. Murphy of the Vrdolyak Law Group to investigate whether Saxon received adequate care.

The Chicago Reporter launched an investigation into the owner of the facility, Floyd Schlossberg, and found:

- Each of the three predominantly black facilities he owns received the lowest possible rating in 2009 from Nursing Home Compare, a federal database that evaluates nursing homes that are Medicare- and Medicaid-certified. Less than half of Schlossberg's 16 predominantly white facilities received that same rating.
- Two facilities received the highest ratings. At both facilities, located in Evanston and Skokie, at least 84 percent of the residents were white.

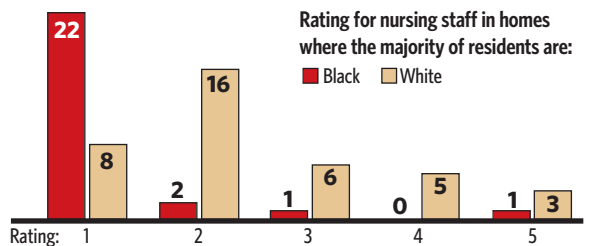
## Nursing home excellence lacking

In Chicago, more than 55 percent of the nursing homes where a majority of the residents are black received the lowest federal rating, compared with 11 percent for white homes. No black home received an excellent rating.



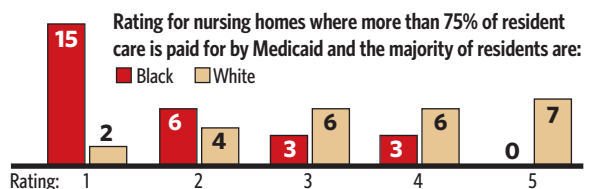
## Staffing quality inequities

Staffing may play a significant role in nursing home disparities. Nearly 85 percent of homes where a majority of residents are black got the lowest rating for nurse staffing, compared with just 21 percent of white homes.



## Inequities, despite poverty

Some say people get poor care because they're poor. But The Chicago Reporter found that even when controlling for poverty—by looking at homes where more than 75 percent of resident care is paid for by Medicaid—significant racial disparities remained.



## Illinois leads nation

Illinois has the highest number and highest percentage of poorly rated black nursing homes, of the states with at least three black facilities. To see how all of the states compare, go to [www.chicagoreporter.com](http://www.chicagoreporter.com).

Rating:	1	2	3	4	5	% of 1's
<b>Illinois</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>61%</b>
Ohio	22	8	3	8	1	52%
Georgia	22	21	8	3	3	39%
Louisiana	17	14	5	5	1	40%
N. Carolina	16	18	11	1	2	33%

Sources: Illinois Department of Public Health, Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services, U.S. Census Bureau, Vincent Mor of Brown University and Nursing Home Compare; analyzed by The Chicago Reporter.

## How to find a nursing home

Finding a high-quality nursing home can be time-consuming and stressful. Experts suggest these tips to help the process:

### 1. Begin the search before problems start

Many times, families don't confront a parent's deterioration until there's a crisis. Making concrete plans when the senior's health is strong can reduce conflict between seniors and their children about when the senior should move.

### 2. Involve the senior

Family members sometimes choose a nursing home without the input of the person who will be living there. Get the senior's approval for the parts of the process in which they want to participate.

### 3. Vary visit times

Monitor how the home operates during different times of the day, outside of pre-set appointments. This prevents staff from only providing basic care—like dressing and feeding residents, and watching their continence times—when they know the family will be dropping by. It also allows family to see if there are adequate staffing levels.

### 4. Do your research

- Nursing Home Compare has a searchable database of more than 95 percent of the nation's nursing homes, listing their inspection results, staffing levels for registered nurses, licensed practical nurses and nursing assistants, and ratings. [www.medicare.gov/NHCompare/home.asp](http://www.medicare.gov/NHCompare/home.asp)
- The Illinois Department of Public Health has a searchable database that lists each home's violation history, racial composition, number of residents and type of care provided. <http://www.idph.state.il.us/webapp/LTCApp/ltc.jsp>
- *The Chicago Reporter* has compiled a database and a Google map listing each Chicago nursing home and its violations, ratings and lawsuits. [www.chicagoreporter.com](http://www.chicagoreporter.com)

### 5. Talk to residents, their families

Have a meal in the home's cafeteria. Talk with residents about their life at the home, and ask social workers about staffing levels and turnover as well as about specific concerns you have for your family member. Observe interactions between staff and residents and determine whether they are warm.

### 6. Consider distance

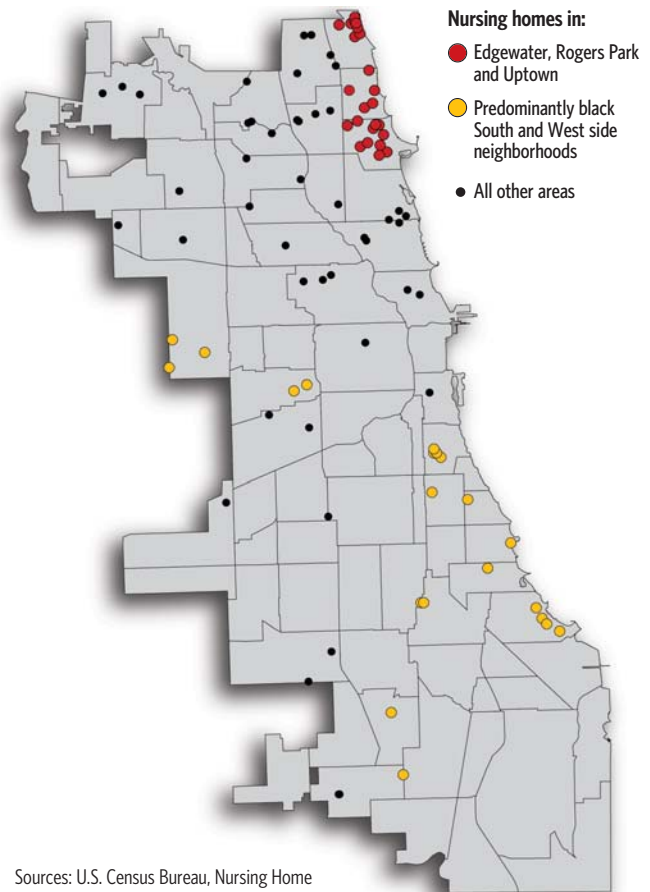
Quality is important. So are regular visits from family. A state-of-the-art facility that is 50 miles away may not be as desirable as a lesser-quality neighborhood facility.

### 7. Make it a family affair

Getting multiple family members involved in the process can allow the responsibility of a senior's care to be shared, lessening the chance of blame among family members if something goes wrong.

## Unequal supply

There are two more nursing homes in the Rogers Park, Edgewater and Uptown neighborhoods than on the entire South and West sides, which in 2007 had close to six times the number of seniors in these three Northeast Side neighborhoods.



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Nursing Home Compare; analyzed by *The Chicago Reporter*

## Additional Resources

### ORGANIZATIONS

#### AARP

<http://www.aarp.org>

#### National HealthCare Corp.

<http://www.nhccare.com>

### ADVOCACY

#### Illinois Citizens for Better Care

<http://www.illinoiscares.org>

#### National Citizens' Coalition for Nursing Home Reform

<http://www.nccnhr.org>

### GOVERNMENT

#### City of Chicago

<http://egov.cityofchicago.org>

#### Cook County Public Guardian

<http://www.publicguardian.org>

#### Illinois Department of Aging

<http://www.state.il.us/aging>

#### Nursing Home Compare

<http://www.medicare.gov/NHCompare>

### LEGAL ADVOCACY

#### Legal Assistance Foundation

<http://lafchicago.org>

### BOOKS

#### Smart Care: When a Loved One is in a Nursing Home

by Wendy Meltzer

For a complete list of resources, go to [www.chicagoreporter.com](http://www.chicagoreporter.com)