

Red Flags Cheat Sheet

Use this quick screen during and after your tour. One or two concerns may be explainable. A pattern is a strong signal to pause or walk away.

Staffing and culture

- Vague or shifting answers about ratios by shift
- Heavy reliance on agency workers without a plan to reduce it
- High leadership turnover or “new to role” directors across multiple positions
- Staff who avoid eye contact, appear rushed, or speak about residents in front of them without inclusion

Training and oversight

- No evidence of recent dementia specific training or coaching logs
- New caregivers working alone on the unit with minimal supervision
- Inconsistent approaches to distress behaviors from one shift to the next

Clinical quality

- Unable or unwilling to share fall, transfer, or infection data
- No clear process for medication review or psychotropic stewardship
- Post fall huddles not documented or care plans unchanged after events
- Repeated hospital transfers without an explanation of what changed to prevent the next one

Environment and daily life

- Confusing layout, busy carpet patterns, poor signage, or glare
- Bathrooms hard to find from the bed or hidden behind closet doors
- Dining room is loud and chaotic, no adaptive utensils visible, residents not cued to eat or drink
- Little evidence of secure outdoor access or it is rarely used

Engagement and dignity

- Activity calendar looks impressive, but you do not see small group or one to one engagement
- Residents idle for long periods in hallways or in front of a TV
- Limited life story information in rooms or charts, and staff do not know personal preferences

Communication and transparency

- Defensive responses to routine questions
- Refusal to share Texas HHS survey results or plans of correction
- No clear notification timelines for falls, illness, or medication changes

Safety and emergency readiness

- No generator or unclear answers about what it powers
- Missing resident drills not performed or undocumented
- No specific plan for hurricanes, flooding, or boil water notices

If you see several of these red flags, keep looking. The right community will welcome scrutiny and show how its daily practices protect residents, not just how the building looks.