



## Southland nursing homes receive five, four stars

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From staff and wire reports

Five nursing homes in the Southland received four or five stars in a new ranking system unveiled today by the federal government.

The rankings - in which five stars is the best rating - are part of a new system that analyzes an online database of nursing home information.

### Top-Rated Nursing Homes

*These nursing homes received a five-star rating under a new federal ranking system.*

Brighton Gardens of Burr Ridge  
Burr Ridge

Fairview Baptist Home  
Downers Grove

Lexington of LaGrange  
LaGrange

Oakbrook Healthcare Centre  
Oak Brook

Our Lady of Angels Retirement Home  
Joliet

Smith Village  
2320 W. 113th Place  
Chicago

Nationwide, about 22 percent of the nearly 16,000 -- nursing homes received the federal government's lowest rating, while 12 percent received the highest ranking possible.

A home could obtain up to five stars based on criteria such as staffing and how well they fared in state inspections. The lowest ranking possible was one star. Such a simple rating for so complex a task as caring for the elderly has led to much anxiety in the nursing home industry.

Kerry Weems, acting administrator for the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, said the agency was merely taking existing data already on the agency's Web site and making it easier for patients and families to choose a nursing home.

"This should help consumers in narrowing their choices, but nothing should substitute for visiting a nursing home when making a decision," Weems said.

Officials also see the new rating system as a way to challenge nursing homes to improve the care they provide to nearly 1.5 million patients nationwide.

"Transparency is key when it comes to nursing home

## **Four-star nursing homes**

*These nursing homes received a four-star rating.*

The British Home  
Brookfield

Crestwood Terrace  
13301 S. Central Ave.  
Crestwood

Dolton Healthcare Centre  
14325 S. Blackstone  
Dolton

Evergreen Health Care Center  
10124 S. Kedzie Ave.  
Evergreen Park

Holy Family Villa  
12220 S. Will-Cook Road  
Palos Park

Manorcare of Westmont  
Westmont

Montgomery Place  
5550 South Shore Drive  
Chicago

Park House  
2320 S. Lawndale Ave.  
Chicago

Presidential Pavilion  
8001 S. Western Ave.  
Chicago

Smith Crossing  
10501 Emilie Lane  
Orland Park

South Suburban Hospital  
17800 S. Kedzie Ave.  
Hazel Crest

St. James Manor & Villa  
1251 E. Richton Road  
Crete

quality," said Sen. Herb Kohl (D-Wis.).

Under the new system, five stars means a nursing home ranks "much above average," four star indicates "above average," three means "about average," two is a "below average" ranking with a one indicating "much below average." The rankings will be updated monthly. The industry is already questioning the validity of the rankings.

To nursing home operators, the five-star system is a great idea whose time has not yet come.

The system "is poorly planned, prematurely implemented and hamhandedly rolled out," said Larry Minnix, president and chief executive officer of the American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging, an industry trade group.

The ratings are based on three major criteria: state inspections, staffing levels and quality measures, such as the percentage of residents with pressure sores. The nursing homes will receive stars for each of those categories as well as for their overall quality.

Consumer groups like the concept, but they agreed there are some potential problems with the data. For example, the staffing data is self-reported just before state surveys and is widely recognized as unreliable.

"From a consumer viewpoint, it's not stringent enough," said Alice H. Hedt, executive director of the National Citizens' Coalition for Nursing Home Reform. "It's basically taking information already available on Medicare's Nursing Home Compare Web site and pulling it into an easier system for consumers to use, and that is a good thing."

Hedt said consumers should consider the star ratings, but not solely rely on them when comparing facilities. Her organization also issued a press release warning that nursing homes may appear in the ratings to give better care than they actually do.

"Our initial reaction is that consumers should probably avoid any facility with a one- or two-star rating and even a three-star rating unless people they trust convince them that the rating is inaccurate or unfair," she said.