

# Assisted Living Report Card Ratings Guide

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## Overview

Since 2023, the Minnesota Board on Aging (MBA) and Department of Human Services (DHS), collaborating with the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), Minnesota IT Services (MNIT), Vital Research, and the University of Minnesota, have offered an Assisted Living Report Card website. The report card is designed to give people information on assisted living quality when looking for an assisted living. It lets them compare assisted living performance in topics that matter to them:

- Resident quality of life interviews
- Family satisfaction surveys
- Resident health related state inspections findings (coming soon)
- Safety related state inspections findings (coming soon)
- Staffing related state inspections findings (coming soon)
- Substantiated maltreatment findings (coming soon)

This information is calculated, audited and/or collected by professional third parties. To see more information about the overall project, see the [Department of Human Services webpage on the Assisted Living Report Card](#). Please contact the Aging and Adult Services Division at DHS at [dhs.aasd.hcbs@state.mn.us](mailto:dhs.aasd.hcbs@state.mn.us) with questions or comments.

This guide defines the report card quality measures and describes how they are scored.

## Star Ratings

The report card shows how Minnesota assisted living facilities score on key quality measures that matter to residents, advocates, the public, and policymakers. For each assisted living facility, quality measures are scored on a five-star scale, with one star representing the lowest possible rating and five stars representing the highest possible rating.

Facility performance on these measures generally represents a normal distribution. A normal distribution means that most of the results are close to the statewide average, with a few outliers both higher and lower than the average. If the data were graphed for these measures, the graphs would look like a bell-shaped curve.

For each of these measures, the mean (average) is determined for the data set. The standard deviation for the data set is then calculated. The standard deviation is a statistic that tells how tightly the results are clustered around the average. When the results are tightly bunched together around the average, the standard deviation is small. When the results are more widespread, the standard deviation becomes larger. A standard deviation may be thought of as the average of the differences from the mean. The thresholds for assigning stars to each facility's performance are as follows:

- 5 Stars: Mean plus 1½ standard deviations OR top 7% of facilities
- 4 Stars: Mean plus ½ to 1½ standard deviations
- 3 Stars: Mean plus or minus ½ standard deviations
- 2 Stars: Mean minus ½ to 1½ standard deviations
- 1 Star: Mean minus 1½ standard deviations

The University of Minnesota recommends using a standard deviation approach to star ratings, like the [Minnesota Nursing Home Report Card](#) star ratings. It also recommends giving the top 7% of facilities 5 stars. This is because facility scores are tightly bunched together at the high end of scores for the Resident and Family surveys. This means that without the adjustment to give the top 7% of facilities 5 stars, few facilities would fall into 5 stars, and many more would fall into 3 and 4 stars. Seven percent was chosen because if the distribution of scores for Resident and Family Surveys was normal, 6.68% would be 1 ½ standard deviations above the average so we round to 7%.

## License Types

The definitions of license types included in the report card are:

**Approved:** A facility has been issued a license after passing a state licensing survey. The Minnesota Department of Health calls this an assisted living facility (ALF) license.

**Approved for dementia care:** A facility has been issued a license after passing a state licensing survey and meets additional standards related to dementia care. The Minnesota Department of Health calls this an assisted living facility with dementia care (ALFDC) license.

**New:** A facility has met certain preliminary licensing requirements but has not yet passed a state licensing survey. The Minnesota Department of Health calls this a provisional assisted living facility (PALF) license.

**New for dementia care:** A facility has met certain preliminary licensing requirements, including additional standards related to dementia care, but has not yet passed a state licensing survey. The Minnesota Department of Health calls this a provisional assisted living facility with dementia care (PALFDC) license.

You can learn more about the different assisted living facility license types at the [Minnesota Department of Health website](#).

## Resident Quality of Life

On a rolling schedule, trained staff employed by an independent contractor of the State interview residents who agree to answer questions about their quality of life in eligible assisted living facilities. Eligible facilities for the 2022-2023 round of surveys are those that have capacity to serve twenty or more people. Interviewers visit a random sample of residents to participate, unless they are severely cognitively impaired, ill or their guardian refuses on their behalf. Interviewers conduct surveys at all eligible facilities within about one year.

Scores for facilities that reach a 6% margin of error are included in the report card. This means that enough surveys were completed at the facility to be confident that the facility's score wouldn't change more than 6% if a different set of residents took the survey. To see the sampling table, visit [Vital Research's Assisted Living Quality of Life Survey Documents page](#).

Interviewers use a standardized survey that asks about resident quality of life over a variety of topics or domains. These include people who work here, physical environment, food, meaningful activities, choice/autonomy, religion/spirituality, safety/privacy, and finances. Researchers at the University of Minnesota and Vital Research designed the survey for use by people with memory loss, cognitive impairments, and other disabilities. To view the survey, visit [Vital Research's Assisted Living Quality of Life Survey Documents page](#). For more information about how these topics or domains were chosen and how the survey was developed and tested, visit the [Department of Human Services' Assisted Living Report Card information page](#).

The University of Minnesota calculates the Resident Quality of Life score by first calculating the average domain scores for each completed survey. The University of Minnesota combines these scores to calculate the facility's average domain scores and Resident Quality of Life score. When calculating the average score for a single survey, only domains where the resident answered more than half the questions count toward the score. When not enough questions are answered for a particular domain in more than half of the surveys, the facility's domain score will appear blank on the Resident Quality of Life-Details section of the report card. Due to low response rates, the finances domain is not included in the facility score for any facility.

Facility scores are risk adjusted based on where the facility is located (the seven county Twin Cities area or greater Minnesota). Risk adjustment helps make comparisons between facilities more fair by accounting for facility characteristics that are out of a facility's control but still affect a facility's score.

All facility scores across the state are then combined to find the Minnesota average and standard deviation (how spread out the scores are). Stars are assigned by comparing each facility's Resident Quality of Life score to the Minnesota average and standard deviation. The Minnesota average and standard deviations are calculated by including the most recent facility score for each facility, and as scores are updated on a rolling basis, a facility's old score is replaced with its new score. A new Minnesota average and standard deviation is calculated on a regular basis.

Assisted living facilities showing "n/a" don't have data available to display a rating. Common reasons why facilities don't have this data include not being eligible to participate in surveys due to the facility's small size, not being contacted to participate during the survey cycle, or not getting enough survey responses to meet the margin of error. Facilities showing "X" were eligible to participate and were contacted to participate but refused.

The Resident Quality of Life - Details section includes the average domain score for all completed surveys at that facility. The Overall experience domain represents the average score from two questions asking for a resident's overall feelings about the facility and their quality of life. The Average score is the average combined score for all domains. All these domains, not including Average score, are included in the average combined score and star rating.

## Family Satisfaction

Family, friends, and other people involved in residents' lives often have different concerns about the assisted living than their loved ones. On a rolling schedule, an independent contractor of the State mails a family satisfaction survey to the primary contact for every resident at each eligible facility. Eligible facilities for the 2022-2023 round of surveys are those that have capacity to serve twenty or more people. The number of surveys mailed for each facility varies based on the number of residents in the facility with a primary contact. The survey measures family satisfaction on eight key topics or domains. These include care experience, choice/preference, personal care needs, cost of care, housekeeping, meals, physical environment, and staff care. To view the family survey, visit [Vital Research's Assisted Living Quality of Life Survey Documents page](#). For more information about how these topics or domains were chosen and how the survey was developed and tested, visit the [Department of Human Services' Assisted Living Report Card information page](#).

Scores for facilities that reach a 6% margin of error are included in the report card. This means that enough surveys were completed at the facility to be confident that the facility's score wouldn't change more than 6% if a different set of people took the survey. To see the sampling table, visit [Vital Research's Assisted Living Quality of Life Survey Documents page](#).

The University of Minnesota calculates the Family Satisfaction score by first calculating the average domain scores for each completed survey. The University of Minnesota combines these scores to calculate the facility's average domain scores and Family Satisfaction score. When calculating the average score for a single survey, only domains where the respondent answered more than half the questions count toward the score. When not enough questions are answered for a particular domain in more than half of the surveys, the facility's domain score will appear blank on the Family Satisfaction-Details section of the report card.

Facility scores are risk adjusted based on where the facility is located (the seven county Twin Cities area or greater Minnesota). Risk adjustment helps make comparisons between facilities more fair by accounting for facility characteristics that are out of a facility's control but still affect a facility's score.

All facility scores across the state are then combined to find the Minnesota average and standard deviation (how spread out the scores are). Stars are assigned by comparing each facility's Family Satisfaction score to the Minnesota average and standard deviation. The Minnesota average and standard deviations are calculated by including the most recent facility score for each facility, and as scores are updated on a rolling basis, a facility's old score is replaced with its new score. A new Minnesota average and standard deviation is calculated on a regular basis.

Assisted living facilities showing "n/a" don't have data available to display a rating. Common reasons why facilities don't have this data include not being eligible to participate due to the facility's small size, not being

contacted to participate during the survey cycle, or not getting enough survey responses to meet the margin of error. Facilities showing “X” were eligible to participate and were contacted to participate but refused.

The Family Satisfaction - Details section includes the average domain score for all completed surveys at that facility. The Overall satisfaction domain represents the average score from three questions asking for a family member’s overall feelings about the facility. Average score is the average combined score for all domains. All these domains, not including Average score, are included in the average combined score and star rating.

## **Resident Health, Safety, and Staffing**

These measures are under development. More information will be provided once these ratings are published on the report card.