

HOSPICE CARE

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Hospice isn't a place; it's an attitude. It's about dying well rather than getting well—about helping the patient and his or her family make the most of the time that's left by emphasizing compassion and comfort.

If you and your loved one are facing an end-of-life situation, use the following steps to discover more about hospice care.

- 1) Determine eligibility.
- 2) Become familiar with services and terms.
- 3) Discuss with family members.
- 4) Locate services and hold interviews.
- 5) Look into payment options and policies.
- 6) Arrange for services.
- 7) Take advantage of counseling.

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1) Determine eligibility.

“Hospice care is for patients with life-threatening illnesses who can no longer benefit from curative treatment and generally have life expectancies of six months or less as determined by a physician,” according to Pat Baskind, LCSW, a hospice worker.

Hospice patients seek comfort-oriented care rather than treatment aimed at a cure. Both the care recipient and the physician must consent to hospice care versus traditional medical treatments. Usually, there are no restrictions in terms of diseases or illnesses.

2) Become familiar with services and terms.

Hospice doctors, nurses, and volunteers are dedicated to the idea that dying has a purpose that can be accomplished with dignity. Anyone considering hospice should bear the following in mind:

- | A hospice team won't “battle” a disease or try to overcome an illness.
- | Hospice focuses on controlling symptoms and managing pain.
- | Most hospice services honor the patient's stated preferences for withdrawal or withholding of life-sustaining measures.
- | Through counseling and bereavement services, hospice puts an increased focus on the spiritual and emotional aspects of care.
- | These services are available at home and in residential facilities.

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Palliative care programs are similar to hospice—with the same goals and focus—but there are some important practical distinctions:

- | Life-prolonging medications and measures may be used in palliative care.
- | There are no time restrictions on palliative care. Care can be provided to chronically ill as well as terminal patients.
- | Hospice care is most common at home. Palliative care usually takes place in a hospital, nursing home, or long-term care facility.

3) Discuss with family members.

Make sure that everyone in the family understands that hospice care doesn't mean that your loved one is "giving up." Rather, he or she is choosing to make the most of the time that's left, while ensuring that the family will also receive necessary supportive services. Hospice simply allows the patient and family to focus on the emotional and spiritual aspects of care, so that medical concerns don't dominate the dying process.

Family members should also be aware that the hospice patient generally will decide what kinds of medical treatment to undergo based on doctor recommendations. The patient, family members, personal physicians, and hospice team then develop a plan of care based on the particular situation.

4) Locate services and hold interviews.

A doctor or other health professional may be able to make a recommendation, and the resources located at www.CaregiversLibrary.org can help narrow down your search of hospice services in your area. While visits to multiple services may provide the most information, you can eliminate some choices by calling ahead and checking references.

Some hospice services require a "Do Not Resuscitate" order, which means that no heroic measures will be taken if the patient's heart stops beating. This can be an emotional issue for all concerned, but it is consistent with the hospice philosophy of emphasizing comfort rather than the medical model of prolonging life.

- | Some hospice services require the involvement of a family member as the primary caregiver.
- | Use the **Hospice Interview Questions** form at the end of this section as a starting place during your visits.

5) Look into payment options.

Many patients qualify for hospice care under Medicare or Medicaid, and many private insurance companies also cover these programs. Each service has its own payment policies, but historically, no patient is ever refused hospice services.

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There are no limits on how long Medicare will cover hospice care, although coverage is divided into benefit periods (two initial 90-day periods, and then an unlimited number of 60-day periods). A doctor must continue to certify the patient as terminal at the end of each period.

6) Arrange for services.

In at-home care, patients and families receive scheduled visits by members of the hospice team, including nurses, social workers, chaplains, volunteers, and doctors. These visits are determined by the plan of care and the ongoing needs of the patient and family. Generally, hospice nurses are on-call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with access to physicians.

While at-home care is the most common option, hospice care can take place at a residential facility for any of the following reasons:

- | If the primary caregiver cannot provide round-the-clock care.
- | If the home cannot be modified to fit the patient's needs.
- | If the medical care is too complex for an untrained person.
- | If the primary caregiver is a long-distance caregiver.

7) Take advantage of counseling.

Social workers, chaplains, and bereavement counselors have comprehensive experience and training, and can help family members work through the dying and grieving processes. In general, a hospice team will include some or all of these professionals to help family members through this difficult period.

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- Browse our library containing thousands of articles on all aspects of family caregiving, and congregational and organizational Caregiving Ministries.
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HOSPICE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

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- 1) Is the agency accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting body?
- 2) Is the program Medicare and/or Medicaid certified?
- 3) Does your state require hospice licensing? If so, is the service licensed?
- 4) Is there written documentation regarding the eligibility requirements, financial aspects, employee jobs, liability insurance, and general services of the hospice?
- 5) Will the agency provide references from other healthcare organizations?
- 6) Is the hospice service in good standing with the Better Business Bureau or State Attorney General's office?
- 7) How flexible is the hospice service in negotiating patient differences?
- 8) Does the agency work with the family to generate a professional plan of care for each patient? Will the service provide you with a copy of this plan?
- 9) Is this plan updated periodically or when the need arises?
- 10) Does the hospice require a primary caregiver?
- 11) Will the hospice work with the caregiver to cover job schedules, travel plans, or other responsibilities?
- 12) Does the service hold an evaluation to determine patient needs?
- 13) Does the service consider what the patient can do for him or herself?

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HOSPICE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- 14) How many personnel references does the agency require?
- 15) Are the hospice workers licensed and bonded?
- 16) Does the agency have a routine way of handling complaints?
- 17) How does the agency handle billing?
- 18) Will the agency help find financial assistance?
- 19) Are there payment plans available?
- 20) Does the agency have a 24 hour on-call service?
- 21) Did the hospice inform you of the patient's rights and responsibilities?
- 22) How quickly do hospice services begin?
- 23) What specialized services are available?
- 24) What are the policies regarding residential admission? Inpatient care?
- 25) What hospitals work closely with the residential facilities?

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FUNERAL PLANNING

Planning a funeral is a complicated process, which is made even more difficult by the emotional stress that accompanies the death of a loved one. But many of the arrangements can be made ahead of time, which helps decrease the burden on those left behind. Use this checklist when discussing funeral plans with your loved one, to make sure that his or her final wishes are carried out.

Pre-Planning

All of these items can be arranged in advance of a person's death.

General Preparations

- o Assemble personal information for obituary
- o Choose a charity to direct donations to
- o Decide if jewelry is to remain or be returned
- o Choose a funeral home

Funeral Home Services

- o Choose burial or cremation
- o Select a casket or cremation container
- o Select a burial vault or cremation urn
- o Choose the location/type of service
- o Choose family viewing or visitation
- o Choose a floral arrangement
- o Select a photograph to be displayed
- o Decide which religious or fraternal items are to be displayed
- o Decide what the deceased will wear
- o Select music, hymns, and solos
- o Select scripture or literature to be read
- o Select a memorial register
- o Select memorial folders and acknowledgement cards

Funeral Home Services: Transportation

- o Funeral coach
- o Clergy car
- o Family limousine
- o Pallbearer limousine
- o Flower car

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FUNERAL PLANNING

Participants

- o Choose clergy or officiator
- o Choose organist or other musical participants
- o Select pallbearers
- o Select family member or friend to perform the eulogy
- o Select family member or friend to read scripture or literature

Cemetery Selections

- o Choose a cemetery
- o Select a burial or cremation plot
- o Decide whether above or below ground
- o Select a memorial or grave marker and inscription

Final Arrangements

The following arrangements *cannot* be made beforehand:

- o Arrange for ambulance transfer from place of death
- o Apply for death certificates
- o Apply for a burial permit
- o Set a time and date for the service
- o Request preparation and embalming
- o Compose and submit obituary
- o Arrange location and food for the reception

Personal Information

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Full Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Place of Birth: _____

Country of Citizenship: _____ Social Security Number: _____

Spouse's Name: _____ Maiden Name: _____

Religious Affiliation: _____ Place of Worship: _____

Education:

High School: _____ Institution: _____

Undergraduate Degree: _____ Institution: _____

Graduate Degree: _____ Institution: _____

Career Information:

Employed as: _____ How long? _____

Employed as: _____ How long? _____

Employed as: _____ How long? _____

Military Information:

Serial Number: _____ Rank: _____

Branch of Service: _____ War Service: _____

You may be entitled to full military honors in one of the national cemeteries. There is no charge for services of burial and your spouse may qualify as well. Check with the Veterans' Affairs Department Office, toll free at 800-827-1000.

Other Activities:

Involvement in community or national organizations, clubs, affiliations, volunteering:



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Favorite pastimes, hobbies: _____

Parents:

Father's name: _____ Place of Birth: _____

Mother's name: _____ Place of Birth: _____

Children:

Name: _____ Name: _____

Address: _____ Address: _____

Phone: (H) _____ (W) _____ Phone: (H) _____ (W) _____

Special Instructions: _____ Special Instructions: _____

Name: _____ Name: _____

Address: _____ Address: _____

Phone: (H) _____ (W) _____ Phone: (H) _____ (W) _____

Special Instructions: _____ Special Instructions: _____



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Siblings (brothers and sisters):

Name: _____ Name: _____

Address: _____ Address: _____

Phone: (H) _____ (W) _____ Phone: (H) _____ (W) _____

Special Instructions: _____ Special Instructions: _____

Name: _____ Name: _____

Address: _____ Address: _____

Phone: (H) _____ (W) _____ Phone: (H) _____ (W) _____

Special Instructions: _____ Special Instructions: _____

Also make a list of all other friends and relatives to be notified at the time of death.