

Choosing a hospice program

How do you choose a hospice program?

First of all, you need to know that you have a choice in hospice care providers. While most hospice programs have a similar philosophy of care, how they provide that care may differ. Many people ask their friends, doctors, clergy, or local senior agencies for referrals or about their experiences with particular hospice programs. You may also speak directly with and interview any hospice program so that you feel comfortable with your decision. Here are some questions you may want to consider:

When does hospice start?

Hospice is often initiated with a referral from a clinician. When a program receives this referral, called a physician's order, a visit is scheduled. Typically, hospice care starts as soon as the patient's doctor makes a referral to the program.

Every hospice patient has access to a registered nurse, social worker, home health aide, hospice volunteer, and chaplain. This interdisciplinary team of hospice experts helps develop a personalized plan of care with the patient and family and/or caregiver. The plan establishes the appropriate level of care and number of visits the patient and family will receive. These visits are based on the patient and family needs and the condition of the patient during the course of illness. The frequency of volunteers and spiritual care is at the request of the family and the availability of these services.

What happens if we need to call the nurse after hours?

Hospice care is available seven days a week, 24 hours a day. All hospice programs must provide after hour services.

My loved one is anxious and has a great deal of pain. How will hospice help with that?

Hospice staff has special training to care for all types of physical, emotional and spiritual issues that cause pain, discomfort and distress. Hospice staff works with the patient's physician to make sure that care, medications, therapies, and procedures are designed to make the patient as comfortable physically and emotionally as possible.

What does a hospice volunteer do?

Hospice volunteers are generally available to provide different types of support to patients and their loved ones, which may include staying with a patient to give family members a break and lending emotional support and companionship to patients and family members. Because hospice volunteers spend time in patients' and families' homes, each hospice program will have an application and interview process to assure the person is right for this type of volunteer work. In addition, hospice programs require volunteers to undergo background checks and participate in a training program designed specifically for working with patients and families at end of life. Areas covered by these training programs often include understanding hospice, confidentiality, working with families, listening skills, signs and symptoms of approaching death, loss and grief and bereavement support.

The patient lives in an assisted living community. Can hospice provide services there?

Hospice services can be provided to a terminally ill person wherever they live. This means a patient living in a nursing facility or long-term care facility can receive specialized visits from hospice nurses, home health aides, chaplains, social workers, and volunteers, in addition to other care and services provided by the community.

Is hospice regulated by the government?

Yes. There are state licensure requirements that must be met by hospice programs in order for them to deliver care. In addition, hospices must comply with federal regulations in order to be approved for reimbursement under Medicare. Hospices must periodically undergo inspection to be sure they are meeting regulatory standards in order to maintain their license to operate and the certification that permits Medicare reimbursement. You may have questions of your own you want to ask. Feel free to ask as many questions as you need to make your decision. Ask for an informational visit. Most hospice programs will send someone out to meet with you in person and answer your questions.

About Providence Hospice

Providence Hospice provides expert, compassionate care for individuals as they face the end of life. Hospice services are provided in the patient's home, wherever that may be. Your hospice team will focus on quality of life and address your needs as a whole, from managing pain and symptoms to providing emotional, social, and spiritual support. Because each family is special, we tailor our team approach to your specific needs.

Providence Hospice is Medicare and Medicaid certified and accredited by The Joint Commission. We are members of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization and the Oregon Hospice and Palliative Care Association.

A physician's order is required for a patient to begin receiving hospice care. However, anyone may call for information or an informational visit. Information is also on our website.

Portland metro: 503-215-CARE (2273)

Hood River: 541-387-6449

Southern Oregon: 541-732-6500

The Dalles: 541-296-3228

Central Willamette Valley: 503-845-2463

(Providence Benedictine Hospice)

Providence.org/hospice.