

UNDERSTANDING Hospice Care

Some people become frightened when they hear the word “hospice” and believe accepting hospice care means giving up hope. Hospice services can be a tremendous source of help and comfort and is focused on living life to its fullest.

What is hospice?

Hospice care is considered to be the model for quality, compassionate care for people facing a life-limiting illness with a prognosis of six months or less. Hospice care involves a team-oriented approach to expert medical care, pain management, and emotional and spiritual support tailored to the person’s needs and wishes. Support is provided to the person’s loved ones as well.

The focus of hospice relies on the belief that each of us has the right to die pain-free and with dignity, and that our loved ones will receive the necessary support to allow us to do so. Hospice focuses on care, not curing.

How does hospice work?

Anyone can inquire about hospice services. Unless restricted by the insurance provider, selection of the hospice service provider is a personal choice. A referral to the hospice provider from the individual’s physician is required to begin care.

Once the referral is received, hospice staff will then visit the individual to assess the overall needs and wishes and set up an interdisciplinary care team that includes the individual and the primary caregiver. The care team works together to create a plan of care specifically to meet the needs and desires of the individual and the family.

The hospice team includes: physicians; nurses; hospice aides; social workers; chaplains; speech, physical and occupational therapists when needed; and trained volunteers.

Among its major responsibilities, the interdisciplinary hospice team:

- Manages the person’s pain and symptoms;
- Provides emotional support;
- Provides needed medications, medical supplies, and equipment related to managing the life-limiting illness;
- Coaches loved ones on how to care for the person;
- Delivers special services like speech, occupational and physical therapy when needed;
- Makes short-term inpatient care available when pain or symptoms become too difficult to manage at home, or the caregiver needs respite time; and
- Provides grief support to surviving loved ones and friends.

All hospice providers in Oklahoma are licensed.

Where are hospice services provided?

Hospice services are most often provided in the comfort of wherever the individual calls home. This can be at their own home, long-term care or assisted living facilities, a family member’s home, hospital or special end-of-life care facility.

How is hospice paid for?

In Oklahoma, hospice care is paid for by Medicare (Part A), the Veterans Administration and most private health insurance plans, private pay and the ADvantage Program.

How do I locate a hospice program?

To locate a hospice provider, consult your physician, refer to the Hospice section beginning on page 144, or ask friends and family if they have experience with a quality hospice. You can also contact the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization at (800) 658-8898 toll-free or www.nhpco.org or the Oklahoma Hospice and Palliative Care Association at (866) 459-4152 or <http://www.okhospice.org>.

