



Selecting a Hospice Provider



Just like selecting any other medical care, if you or someone you care about needs the support of hospice, it is important to find a provider that is a good fit. There may be a number of organizations that provide care in your area. If your doctor or a hospital is making a referral for hospice care, ask for several hospice providers to review and select the one that is best for you and your family. Although if you live in a rural area or are requiring hospice care for a child, this may not always be possible.

The following questions are designed to help you learn how hospice organizations may differ, which will allow you to select a hospice provider that is the best fit for you and your family:

- Does the hospice offer and provide same day admissions?
- Is the hospice a for-profit or nonprofit organization?
- How will the hospice team keep my other doctors informed about my care?
If you do not currently have a doctor, the hospice doctor can also be your primary care doctor.
- On average, how many other patients will the hospice nurse be caring for?
The lower the number the better.
- Does the hospice team care for other patients who live close by?
Ideally, it helps if the hospice team has multiple patients in an area since it makes it easier to add additional visits if necessary.
- Does the hospice offer telehealth services?

Managing pain:

- How does the hospice handle after hours calls?
- What is considered after hours?
- Is there a nurse available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year?
- If I call after hours how are calls assessed?
- In what situations would a visit be made?
- On average, how long would it take for someone to come to my home if a visit is required?
- Are all patients given a comfort kit in the home? *A comfort kit includes medication to manage symptoms and pain that a caregiver can provide, if directed by a nurse.*
- Is training provided to caregivers on pain management medication?

If you have symptoms that cannot be managed at home, some hospices have their own inpatient centers where you will go until the symptoms are under control.

Also, some hospices have relationships with hospitals in their area. How does this hospice handle these situations?



Understanding costs, medication, supplies and coverage:

- If you are under the age of 65 with private insurance, can the hospice provider help determine what services will be covered, and what will not?
- If you take medications and you want to continue taking them, will this be allowed? How will these medications be covered?
- What supplies and equipment will be provided?
- If you live in a long-term care facility or nursing home, can the hospice organization provide care at that community?
A hospice organization needs to have a contract with a long-term care facility to provide services.
- If you are a Veteran, will the hospice take your VA benefits? Do they provide any additional support for veterans?
- If you are uninsured is the hospice equipped to provide charity care or sliding scale fees?
- Are you undocumented? Is the hospice able to provide care in this situation? Are they well-informed about public charge concerns and other issues affecting mixed status families?

Respecting diversity, including religious and cultural traditions, at end-of-life:

- Are the hospice staff knowledgeable and trained to support my religious beliefs or cultural traditions?
- Does the hospice team speak the same language as my family or loved ones?
- Does the hospice provide interpreters for my preferred language? Do they have ASL interpreters?
- Does the hospice prioritize diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice?
- Does the hospice have a diverse workforce?
- Is the hospice able to accommodate disabled patients or loved ones?
- Are they equipped to support individuals with physical, sensory, cognitive, and psychological disabilities in addition to their terminal illness?

Support for the family and caregiver:

- How do you support my family after our loved one dies? Who provides the support and for how long?
- Do you provide referrals for support in my community?
- Do you have relationships with caregiver agencies/city/social services who can provide additional help?
- Does the hospice provide respite care? If so, how and where is this provided?
Most hospice care takes place in the home. Respite care is a hospice benefit that allows the care team to temporarily take over duties for the primary caregiver. This allows a family caregiver the time they need to take care of themselves or cover other responsibilities. Some hospices have an inpatient unit that provides the respite stay. Others may use a bed at a long-term care facility. Which facilities does the hospice organization use? Would you be comfortable going there?

We encourage you to visit the government Medicare website, Care Compare at [medicare.gov/care-compare](https://www.medicare.gov/care-compare). It provides a list with ratings of hospice providers, based on customer ratings and feedback, that you can use to evaluate hospices.