

How-to Choose a Hospice Program

If you or a loved one is managing a terminal condition, End-of-life care may seem like an overwhelming consideration. Hospice is devoted to improving the quality of a person's End-of-Life by providing comfort and compassion to both the patient and their loved ones.

When considering hospice care, how will you choose a program that best fits your own or a loved one's needs?

Things to Consider When Choosing a Hospice Program

The relationship between a terminally ill patient and their hospice caregiver is based on sensitivity and trust. When choosing a hospice program, begin with your first impressions after meeting the hospice representatives. They often indicate the quality of the relationship you will have with your hospice providers.

Then consider the following questions and recommendations:

- Do others recommend this hospice?
Get referrals from friends, local hospitals, assisted living or nursing homes or healthcare providers. Geriatric Care Managers also make hospice referrals based on what they learn from families they serve.
- Is this hospice Medicare or Medicaid-certified?
Medicare is the primary reimbursement source for hospice care. Medicare certification is important if the patient is a Medicare recipient.
- Can this hospice meet your loved one's care needs?
Discuss your care concerns. Ask how they will be addressed.
- Are there limits to treatment?
Ask if the care that the patient receives now is provided by this hospice. For example, services like chemotherapy may not be offered by all hospices.
- What personal care services are provided?
Confirm whether personal care services like bathing, dressing or eating are provided.

- What relief or respite care options are available?
Family members often become overwhelmed caring for a terminally ill loved one. Ask under what conditions this hospice provides respite care.
- Is this hospice affiliated with an inpatient facility?
Caring for a terminally ill loved one may be unpredictable. It's important to have a plan to manage emergencies and to know where alternate facilities are located.
- What emotional and spiritual support is offered to the patient and family members?
Ask when and where counseling or bereavement services are offered.
- What is the family's role in caregiving?
Be sure expectations match what your family is able to do. Can this hospice train family members or friends to help provide care if needed or desired?
- How are patient or family concerns handled?
Confirm that there is a clear process for sharing concerns in a timely manner.
- Is this hospice is state-licensed, if required?
Check licensing requirements, and ask if this hospice is Joint Commission Certified through the Joint Commission on the Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO). Though not required, a JCAHO designation indicates a high care standard and third party endorsement.

These guidelines may help you choose a hospice provider so that yours or a loved one's End-of-Life care experience is as comfortable, meaningful and peaceful as possible.

Visit: www.passare.com for more information and expert resources on hospice and many End-of-Life topics.