

# Choosing a Hospice Provider

## Questions to Ask

Whether one hospice, or several, is available to provide care, it is important to speak to the hospice provider before service begins. Their answers to the questions below, along with the general impression that you have of the hospice representative, can help the family and patient understand hospice care and inform a choice.

- ✓ When interviewing a hospice, have a friend or family member present to act as an advocate if possible and take notes.
- ✓ What is expected of the family caregiver?
- ✓ Will the hospice provide training to family caregivers?
- ✓ How often will a hospice team member visit and how long will most visits last?
- ✓ When the hospice orders medication, where can it be picked up, or is it delivered by the hospice?
- ✓ What is the typical response time if it is necessary to reach someone at the hospice after normal business hours, or on weekends and holidays?
- ✓ Will the hospice send a registered nurse, nurse practitioner, or physician to the home if the patient's symptoms are not being managed? How long will it take the nurse/doctor to arrive?
- ✓ How quickly will a plan of care be developed by the hospice, and will it be shared with family/caregivers?
- ✓ What does the hospice do when someone's symptoms cannot be adequately managed at home?
- ✓ If there is a need for inpatient care, how will that be addressed by the hospice, and where will that be provided?
- ✓ Are there any services, medications or equipment that the hospice **doesn't** provide? (Hospice providers are required to provide this information, as well as the reason medications, services, or equipment will not be covered by the hospice.)
- ✓ What kind of out-of-pocket expenses should the family anticipate?
- ✓ Can the hospice provide respite care to give family caregivers a break, and how does the hospice arrange that? Where will the patient go during respite care (hospice house, local nursing home)?

- ✓ What help do your hospice volunteers provide and how can that request for help be made?
- ✓ Does the hospice have any quality data it can share?
- ✓ If a hospice team member is not present at death, will the hospice provide guidance and support to the family?
- ✓ What kind of bereavement support is offered by the hospice?
- ✓ If unhappy with some aspect of care the hospice is providing, who at the hospice should be contacted and how?

Additional topics that may be important to raise when considering a prospective provider:

- ✓ If there are concerns about a hospice caring for someone in the LGBTQ+ community, ask if the hospice has provided education and training to those who will be caring for the individual and if it has a non-discrimination policy.
- ✓ If the person receiving care or their family is non-English speaking, establish that the hospice provider will make accommodations for effective communication by providing interpreters or staff who can speak the language whenever possible.
- ✓ If the person has an intellectual or developmental disability, inquire about whether the hospice team is trained and prepared to provide optimal care for this person.
- ✓ If there are special needs of others in the household where care will be provided, it is important to share those with the hospice team and make them aware of those needs and how they may affect the household and patient care.