

Hospice

Hospice is a concept of care that involves health professionals and volunteers who provide medical, psychological, and spiritual support to terminally ill patients and their loved ones. Hospice stresses quality of life—peace, comfort, and dignity. A principal aim of hospice is to control pain and other symptoms so the patient can remain as alert and comfortable as possible. Hospice services are available to persons who can no longer benefit from curative treatment; the typical hospice patient has a life expectancy of 6 months or less. Hospice programs provide services in various settings: the home, hospice centers, hospitals, or skilled nursing facilities. Patients’ families are also an important focus of hospice care, and services are designed to provide them with the assistance and support they need.

The following resources may offer assistance for people seeking hospice care and information:

- The **National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization** (NHPCO) is a membership organization representing programs and professionals that provide hospice and palliative care in the United States. NHPCO’s mission is to lead and mobilize social change for improved care at the end of life. NHPCO offers publications, information about how to find a hospice, and information about the financial aspects of hospice. Some Spanish-language publications are available, and staff are able to answer calls in Spanish.



Address: Suite 625
1700 Diagonal Road
Alexandria, VA 22314
Telephone: 703-837-1500
1-800-658-8898 (helpline)
E-mail: nhpco_info@nhpco.org
Web site: <http://www.nhpco.org/templates/1/homepage.cfm>

- The **Hospice Association of America (HAA)** is an advocate for hospice organizations. It serves hospices that are freestanding and community-based, as well as those affiliated with home care agencies and hospitals. HAA also distributes a number of publications about hospice to consumers. Publications can be viewed by accessing the organization's Web site. Topics include information about the history of hospice, the benefits of choosing a hospice program, hospice-related statistics, and locations of hospice organizations.

Address: 228 Seventh Street, SE.
Washington, DC 20003
Telephone: 202-546-4759
Web site: <http://www.nahc.org/HAA/home.html>

- The **Hospice Education Institute** serves a wide range of individuals and organizations interested in improving and expanding hospice and palliative care throughout the United States and around the world. The Institute works to inform, educate, and support people seeking or providing care for the dying and the bereaved. HOSPICELINK, a service of the Institute, maintains a computerized database and up-to-date directory of all hospice and palliative care programs in the United States. HOSPICELINK helps patients and their families find hospice and palliative care programs, and provides general information about the principles and practices of good hospice and palliative care.

Address: 3 Unity Square
Post Office Box 98
Machiasport, ME 04655-0098
Telephone: 207-255-8800
1-800-331-1620
E-mail: info@hospiceworld.org
Web site: <http://www.hospiceworld.org>

- **Hospice Net** is an organization that works exclusively through the Internet. This organization's Web site provides hospice-related information for patients, children, and caregivers. It contains articles regarding end-of-life issues and is dedicated to providing information and support to patients facing life-threatening illnesses and to their families and friends.

Address: Suite 51
401 Bowling Avenue
Nashville, TN 37205-5124
E-mail: info@hospicenet.org
Web site: http://www.hospicenet.org

- The **American Cancer Society** (ACS) provides free fact sheets and publications about hospice. The address of a local ACS chapter can be obtained by calling the chapter's toll-free telephone number.

Telephone: 1-800-ACS-2345 (1-800-227-2345)
Web site: http://www.cancer.org

For many people, some hospice expenses are paid by health insurance plans (either group policies offered by employers or individual policies). Information about the types of medical costs covered by a particular policy is available from an employee's personnel office, a hospital or hospice social worker, or an insurance company. Medical costs that are not covered by insurance are sometimes tax deductible.

Medicare, a health insurance program for the elderly or disabled that is administered by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) of the Federal Government, provides payment for hospice care. When a patient receives services from a Medicare-certified hospice, Medicare insurance provides substantial coverage, even for some services that would not be covered outside of a hospice program. To find a Medicare-certified hospice program, people can ask their doctor, a state hospice organization, or the state health department. The telephone number for state hospice organizations and health departments can be found in the state government section of a local telephone directory. The Medicare hotline can answer general questions about Medicare benefits and coverage, and can refer people to their regional home health intermediary for information about Medicare-certified hospice programs. The toll-free telephone number is 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227); deaf and hard of hearing callers

with TTY equipment can call 1-877-486-2048. The booklet *Medicare Hospice Benefits* is the official publication for Medicare hospice benefits. This booklet, which outlines the type of hospice care that is covered under Medicare and provides detailed information about hospice coverage, is available at <http://www.medicare.gov/Publications/Pubs/pdf/02154.pdf> on the Internet.

Medicaid, a Federal program that is part of CMS and is administered by each state, is designed for patients who need financial assistance for medical expenses. Information about coverage is available from local state welfare offices, state public health departments, state social services agencies, or the state Medicaid office. Information about specific state locations may also be found at <http://cms.hhs.gov/medicaid> on the Internet.

In addition, local civic, charitable, or religious organizations may be able to help patients and their families with hospice expenses.

###

Related Resources

Publications (available at <http://www.cancer.gov/publications>)

- National Cancer Institute Fact Sheet 8.1, *National Organizations That Offer Services to People With Cancer and Their Families*
- National Cancer Institute Fact Sheet 8.12, *Advance Directives*
- National Cancer Institute Fact Sheet 8.15, *End-of-Life Care: Questions and Answers*
- *Coping with Advanced Cancer*
- *When Someone You Love Has Advanced Cancer: Support for Caregivers*

National Cancer Institute (NCI) Resources

Cancer Information Service (toll-free)

Telephone: 1-800-4-CANCER (1-800-422-6237)

TTY: 1-800-332-8615

Online

NCI's Web site: <http://www.cancer.gov>

LiveHelp, NCI's live online assistance:

<https://cissecure.nci.nih.gov/livehelp/welcome.asp>

This fact sheet was reviewed on 4/18/06