



## Quality of Life When you Need it Most

When some people hear the word hospice, they think of dying. Well, yes and no. Hospice care is about the quality of life you or a loved one has during their end-of-life journey. It is generally for patients who, with a normal progression of a terminal illness, have a prognosis of six months or less of life.

The dying process can be scary, unknown, and painful, both physically and mentally. Hospice is a way to allow the dying process to be peaceful, planned for, and pain-free.

Dianne Kelly, Regional Vice President for Hospice of Florida, said, “In hospice, we look on end of life as a time of healing and completion for individuals. In our philosophy, helping someone to live fully to the end of life is considered a success.”

**What is Hospice?** Hospice is a service, not a place, where an individual with a terminal illness can receive care that focuses on comfort and symptom management instead of aggressive treatment. The hospice care team, along with a physician, provide medical, emotional, and spiritual support to the patient and loved ones so that the focus can stay on quality of life.

The hospice care team consists of a Medical Director, primary care nurses, certified nurse aides, spiritual care counselors, social workers, and volunteers. This entire care team has a singular focus – providing the absolute best quality of living for whatever amount of life you have left.

**Where does hospice happen?** Hospice services are provided in your home, wherever that is for you. This could be in a skilled nursing facility, assisted living community, hospital, or family home. The hospice care team works alongside the facility or family caregivers to make sure every patient receives the care and support they deserve.

It is significant to note that while hospice services may begin in one location, if medically possible and your quality-of-life goals allow it, it is possible to get to that place you call home. For example, if you begin hospice services from the hospital and your goal is to move to your family home to reside with family caregivers, your hospice team can work to make that happen.

What many people do not realize is that hospice provides support to the patient AND loved ones. Caregiver is not an easy title. The mental and physical strain caregivers feel is normal and expected. But the hospice care team can ease those feelings of exhaustion and fatigue to make sure both patient *and* family can make the most of all of life’s remaining moments. In fact, when a patient dies, the hospice support team will remain available, providing support to loved ones for up to 13 months. Bereavement services and grief support are there to make the end-of-life transition less traumatic, even after your loved one is gone.





## Having the Conversation

Death and dying is a normal part of life. It affects everybody – every gender, every race, every ethnicity, and every age group. Yet in general, it is still a largely taboo subject. Conversations about the dying process and wants and wishes before, during, and at the end of life are not the norm. Why is that? Short answer: It is uncomfortable to talk about.

Hospice care team members help with this too. Social workers, spiritual counselors and even the nursing team are available to bridge the conversational gap that occurs during the death and dying process. Talking about advance directives before they are needed is difficult but important. Advance directives are an individual's wishes regarding medical treatment to make sure those wishes are carried out should the person be unable to communicate them to a doctor.

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*“Death is not opposite of  
life, it is a part of life.”  
Codie Carter*

In hospice, we often ask “What Matters Most,” then a plan of care is developed to make sure this happens. As Program Director Codie Carter said, “Death is not the opposite of life, it is a part of life.” Hospice care is about making sure our patients live life to its fullest, for as long as possible.