



VNA Hospice Care

**VISITING NURSE ASSOCIATION
OF BOSTON & AFFILIATES**

Hospice Care Frequently Asked Questions

What is hospice?

Hospice provides comprehensive, holistic, patient and family-centered care. Hospice staff and volunteers work with patients and their families around the issues of pain management; spiritual, emotional and psychosocial needs; and they make a commitment to being available for the patient and family 24 hours a day, 7 days a week as their needs arise. The primary role of VNA Hospice Care staff is to educate and support the patient and family about their illness to reduce their fears often associated with terminal illness and loss.

When is it time to consider hospice?

Referral to hospice early in the diagnosis of a life-limiting illness (usually six months or less), means that patients and their families are ensured the most supportive program of care and full range of services.

Who is eligible for hospice?

Any person who has been given a prognosis of six or less months is eligible for hospice. Anyone can make a referral to hospice including a family member, nurse, social worker, and of course the doctor.

Does one need to give up all medical coverage to enroll in hospice?

Individuals who choose hospice are people who have chosen palliative care. If a hospice patient develops a condition or illness unrelated to the terminal illness, regular Medicaid and Medicare will pay for treating that disease. Hospitalizations, lab work and other interventions to diagnose and treat these conditions are all covered. VNA Hospice Care, unlike many of the 50 hospices in Massachusetts, has and continues to accept patients that are receiving what has traditionally been considered "curative" treatments such as chemotherapy, radiation, on ventilators and who are prescribed more expensive medications.

How is hospice care paid for?

Hospice care is paid for by a reimbursement system designed by Medicaid, Medicare and some private insurance. Some private insurance plans include a hospice benefit similar to Medicare, while others pay for care similar to home health care. There is no standardized hospice benefit in private insurance and the amount of hospice services a patient can receive may be up to the coverage allowances and limitations set by the insurance the patient subscribes to.

Are all hospices the same?

There are more than 50 hospices in the state of Massachusetts alone. Most hospices are non-profit organizations although a few for-profit hospices have opened in the last few years. Most hospices operate under the same philosophy of providing care, comfort and support to those facing the challenges of life-limiting illness. VNA Hospice Care is unique in that we have a team of dedicated and highly skilled professionals and volunteers, many of whom have been with our agency for 7 or more years.