

## What is Hospice?

Hospice is a service that provides medical, spiritual, and social work services to individuals and families when a doctor has declared an individual to be within six months of death. The medical team evaluates the patient and talks with the physician; the social worker talks to the patient and to the family about the issues that situation creates for them. If the family wishes, a pastor meets with them and provides spiritual counseling. After the paper work is completed, the team including nurse, social worker, and pastor develop a plan and meet with the family on an "as-needed" basis. An aide or volunteer also may be assigned to assist with bathing or other personal care wherever the patient is.

## Access to Hospice

**When my doctor or friends say it is time to explore hospice services, how do I know if I'm ready?** I need to have stopped curative care. If I still need or want blood transfusions or other comfort measures, I can get help from

- ◆ Doctors
- ◆ Hospice nurse, social worker, or intake person
- ◆ Others who have had hospice services

## Who Pays for Hospice?

**Private Insurance-**I need to determine the fullest benefits available with my type of health insurance.

I need to discuss with hospice staff what happens if I outlive the six months that the benefits allow and who will pay for medications and physical therapy if I need them.

**Medicare/Medicaid-**There are federal and state regulations concerning the services I can receive under this insurance, including the insurance coverage for continuous care and hospice health aide visits if I need more than six month's care.

## Choosing a Hospice

Here are some questions to ask about hospices when making a choice about which one is best for me and my family.

- ◆ **Hospice Organization-**When and who founded this hospice? What is their philosophy of care? Is there a religious orientation? Is the hospice "for profit" or "not for profit"?
- ◆ **Services-** How do I determine their strongest and weakest services? Is training available for the family caregiver when I become a hospice patient? Who can best help my

family deal with my impending death? Who can comfort me and my family when I no longer can? Who helps cover medication, equipment, and supply costs?

- ◆ **Help with Problem-Solving-** How does hospice help families cope with changing fears and make decisions about services needed as death approaches? When is my right to make decisions transferred to another?
- ◆ **Availability-** Is nursing coverage available during evening/night and weekend hours? How big an area does hospice's after-hours nurse cover? Is there back-up coverage if the nurse is busy with another family? What happens if I run out of pain medication?
- ◆ **Staff Organization-** Who is the medical director and how long has the director been there? How often do the medical director and hospice team review my plan of care? Who interacts with my physician, and what happens when my physician cannot be reached?
- ◆ **Volunteers-** If I need a volunteer to stay with me or help with errands, how is that match made? What training do volunteers have? If an

issue comes up between my family and a volunteer, who helps resolve it?

- ◆ **Social Worker Involvement-** Does the social worker assist with financial concerns? What other resources can they help with? Will they assist in talking to out-of-town family members?
- ◆ **Chaplain-**What does the chaplain do? If I have my own minister, how does the chaplain coordinate services?
- ◆ **Bereavement Services after Death-** What services are offered to my family after my death and for how long? Will hospice contact my family or must family members request this service?
- ◆ **Services and Burial-** Does the hospice staff have information offered by the Funeral Consumers Alliance of the Virginia Blue Ridge concerning final arrangements and alternatives to traditional choices?
- ◆ **Hospice contact information-** Check with your physician, a hospital social worker, internet listings, or the Yellow Pages to find the hospices in your area.

***Smoothing the Way***  
*additional pamphlets that may be helpful*

*Common Funeral Myths*

*Death Outside the Box*

*Did You Forget? The Most Important Part of Funeral Planning*

*Four-Step Funeral Planning, Where to Start When You Don't Know How to Start*

*Home Funerals*

*How to Plan a Memorial Service*

*Ten Tips for Saving Funeral \$\$\$*

*Viewing and Visitation, the Difference*

*What Would We, the Family, Like?*  
*A reflection of personal choice*

2009

***Finding the***  
**Hospice**

***That Is***  
***Right for You***



**FUNERAL CONSUMERS ALLIANCE**  
*of the*  
**VIRGINIA BLUE RIDGE**

*PO Box 10082*  
*Blacksburg VA 24062-0082*

540-953-5589  
fcavbr@bev.net  
[www.funerals.org/affiliates/fcavbr/](http://www.funerals.org/affiliates/fcavbr/)