



# Tool for Choosing a Hospice

## What is important to you?



Every family is different, just as every hospice is different.

Fortunately, there are many hospices in our area and this tool is designed to:

- Help you decide what is most important to you in choosing who will be on your team.
- Provide questions you can use to interview hospices.

### STEP 1

CIRCLE THE NUMBER THAT BEST REPRESENTS HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT THAT TOPIC

#### FACTORS TO CONSIDER IN CHOOSING A HOSPICE

MOST IMPORTANT      SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT      LEAST IMPORTANT

	5	4	3	2	1
A. General <i>nonprofit / for profit status; location of local office; new</i>	5	4	3	2	1
B. Payment <i>Accept Medicare / Medicaid / private insurance / no insurance</i>	5	4	3	2	1
C. Services Provided <i>Which are important to you? RN / SW / Nursing Assistant / Chaplain / physician</i>	5	4	3	2	1
D. Volunteers	5	4	3	2	1
E. After-hour and weekend coverage	5	4	3	2	1
F. Staff training and credentials	5	4	3	2	1
G. Caregiving assistance	5	4	3	2	1
H. PT / OT / Speech / dietician / radiation / chemotherapy / IV therapy / transfusions / dialysis	5	4	3	2	1
I. Starting care process	5	4	3	2	1



FACTORS TO CONSIDER IN CHOOSING A HOSPICE (continued)	MOST IMPORTANT		SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT		LEAST IMPORTANT
J. Equipment, medications and supplies	5	4	3	2	1
K. 24-hour care	5	4	3	2	1
L. Personal physician's involvement	5	4	3	2	1
M. Care plan	5	4	3	2	1
N. Inpatient or nursing home care	5	4	3	2	1
O. Pain management	5	4	3	2	1
P. Support during last days	5	4	3	2	1
Q. Veteran's care	5	4	3	2	1
R. Grief and bereavement	5	4	3	2	1
S. Disaster Plan	5	4	3	2	1
T. Confidentiality	5	4	3	2	1
U. Family evaluation surveys	5	4	3	2	1

## STEP 2

FOR THOSE CATEGORIES YOU RATE A 4 OR 5, USE THE QUESTIONS BELOW SPECIFIC TO THAT CATEGORY. FOR THOSE YOU RATED A 3 OR LESS, READ THROUGH THOSE QUESTIONS AND ASK THE SPECIFIC ONES ABOUT WHICH YOU THINK YOU MIGHT WANT MORE INFORMATION.

### A. General

1. Are you a for-profit or nonprofit organization? The only two nonprofits in the Charleston area are Roper Hospice and Lutheran Hospice.
2. How long has your hospice been providing services in Charleston?
3. Where is your office located?
4. If this hospice is part of a larger organization, where is the corporate office located?
5. Is your hospice associated with a nursing home?
6. Are you a member of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization?
7. Who do I call if I have a problem or concern?
8. For what reasons have patients transferred to another hospice from your hospice?
9. What are some of the reasons you discharge patients?

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## B. Payment

1. Do you accept Medicare? Medicaid? Private insurance?
2. Can you help me find financial help if I need it?

## C. Services provided

1. How often does your nurse visit? How long is an average visit? How many patients do they visit in a day?
2. How often does a nursing assistant visit? How long is an average visit? How many patients do they visit in a day?
3. How often does a social worker visit? How long is an average visit? How many visits do they make in a day?
4. How often does a chaplain visit? How long is an average visit? How many patients do they visit in a day?
5. Does your medical director make house calls?

## D. Volunteers

1. What kinds of things can volunteers do?
2. What percentage of families who want or need volunteers have them assigned? (It is often difficult to find volunteers in particular geographic areas, willing to drive distances to patient's locations, or have hours available that are when patients and families have a need)
3. Can I leave when the volunteer is here?
4. How many hours of support should I expect to receive from a volunteer a week? A month?
5. What screening and training do volunteers have before being assigned to a family?

## E. After hour and weekend coverage

1. Is there a 24-hour phone number to call? (If so, try it after 5PM and see how the hospice responds to your first call. Ask a question from the list and see if and how they respond.)
2. Which staff do you have available after hours and on the weekend? RN? SW? Nursing assistant? Chaplain? Physician?
3. What is the average length of time for an on-call nurse to respond in person? By phone?

## F. Staff training and credentials

1. Who is your medical director?
2. Is your medical director certified in hospice and palliative care?
3. Do you have nurses or nursing assistants certified in hospice and palliative care?

## G. Caregiving assistance

1. Do you require someone to be in the home 24 hours a day?
2. How can you help me if I have to work or leave to pick up my children/ grandchildren/ or do an errand?
3. Can I leave when the nursing assistant is here?
4. What happens if I can't continue to care for my loved one?

## H. PT / OT / speech / dietary / radiation / chemotherapy / IV therapy / transfusions / dialysis

1. Do you allow physical therapy? Occupational therapy? Speech therapy? Dietary consultation?
2. If so, for what situations?
3. Do you allow patients to continue dialysis?
4. Do you allow patients to receive palliative radiation?
5. Do you allow patients to receive palliative chemotherapy?
6. Do you allow IV therapy?
7. Do you permit periodic transfusions?

## I. Starting care process

1. How do you determine if a patient meets eligibility requirements to receive hospice care?
2. Can you describe the process of initiating care?
3. How quickly can you start care?
4. Can you start care on the weekends or nights when it is more convenient for my family?

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## J. Equipment, medications, and Supplies

1. Do you provide medical equipment? What kind?
2. If I already have equipment, can I keep it, or is it a requirement that the hospice bring in equipment from their company?
3. How often does the medical equipment get checked? By whom?
4. Who trains me on how to use the equipment?
5. What medical supplies do you provide?
6. Do you provide incontinent supplies?
7. Do you provide wipes?
8. Do you pay for all medications?
9. Do you pay for Aricept or Namenda for Alzheimer's patients?

## K. 24 hour care

1. Do you provide staff 24 hours a day?
2. If not, who do you recommend?

## L. Personal physician

1. Can I continue to see my personal physician?

## M. Care plan

1. Who is involved in deciding about care? (Best practices state that the patient and family should be very involved in making all decisions.)
2. In what ways are you flexible in applying procedures and policies to best meet patient/family differences? (If a hospice struggles in answering this question, it might not be a good fit.)

## N. Inpatient or nursing home care

1. In what nursing home facilities do you provide hospice care?
2. In what nursing home facilities do you provide respite care for a break from caregiving?
3. Where do you provide short-term inpatient care?
4. Can you admit patients to the Hospice Center in Mount Pleasant?

## O. Pain management

1. What medications do you use for pain management?
2. I am afraid of morphine. What can you do to help me feel more comfortable with giving it to my loved one?

## P. Support during last days

1. Do you provide someone to be with me at the end?  
If so, for how long?
2. What do I do when my loved one passes?
3. If I don't want the police to come, what can I do?

## Q. Veteran's Care

1. Are you participating in the We Honor Vets Program? (This is a program to educate hospice staff about the unique needs of veterans in hospice care.)
2. What level has the hospice achieved? (There are 4 levels.)
3. What type of training do your staff and volunteers have regarding the special needs of veterans and their families?

## R. Grief and Bereavement

1. Do you offer individual grief counseling?
2. Do you offer grief support groups?  
If so, where and when?
3. What other grief support do you offer?

## S. Disaster Plan

1. What is your plan to continue to deliver services after a hurricane?

## T. Confidentiality

1. How do you make sure each patient's treatment remains confidential?
2. Have you had famous clients in the past in which confidentiality was extremely important?

## U. Family Evaluation Surveys

1. Do you conduct a family evaluation survey?
2. Ask what areas do families love about your hospice.
3. What areas are you working on improving?
4. What percentage of families you serve recommend your hospice?