

## HOSPICE AND THE FAMILY- HOME CENTERED CARE (For Medicare/Medicaid certified programs)

### *The Hospice approach to care* \_\_\_\_

Many seriously ill individuals prefer to remain and be cared for at home with the support of their family. Supporting this choice with various programs and services is a long public health tradition and specialty of hospice programs. The hospice team approach is designed to facilitate and establish a partnership with the patient and his family caregivers so that the patient's desire to remain in the comfort of their own homes is realized. Beyond this, the mutual goal of patient, family and the hospice team is for the patient and family to experience the fullest, highest quality of life possible. Patient directed care, dignity, peace and comfort are priorities.

When a family member learns that a loved one is seriously ill and facing a life-limiting illness, they typically experience a sense of loss, sadness and heightened emotions. Caring for a loved one who is seriously ill and likely at the end of life is a physically and emotionally demanding situation for a family caregiver. The levels of stress are likely to increase as time passes and the illness progresses. The hospice program addresses the needs and concerns of the patient and family members in order to realize the common goal of providing excellent care in the home.

The priority for the hospice team is patient care. Professional team members including physicians, registered nurses (RNs), medical social workers, therapists, counselors and volunteers develop an individualized plan of care for the patient. This plan considers what types of assistance is needed for family caregivers to carry out their role in caring for the patient, thereby enabling the patient to remain at home. Family members may include close friends of the family. An RN leads the hospice care team and manages patient care with the hospice team as well as consulting and coordinating patient care with the patient's doctor.

### *Services* \_\_\_\_

Hospice care provides skilled medical care focusing on managing the symptoms of the patient's illness including pain and preventing complications. The stress upon family caregivers is reduced by the knowledge that the patient is receiving frequent skilled care and monitoring. Patients and caregivers can also call for medical advice and support as needed, 24 hours a day seven days a week, and talk with someone familiar with the patient's conditions.

Help is available for patients and for family caregivers to cope with their situation and deal with the diminished capacity of their loved one, an uncertain future, financial matters and the new caregiver role or roles that family members take on.

- Family Caregivers become part of the hospice care team and are trained to perform their care giving role with confidence and competence. (Help is always a phone call away.)
- Bereavement care and services are available, and continue for 13 months after their loved one has passed away. This knowledge is often a comfort to the patient, who knows that support from hospice continues once he or she dies.
- Basic personal care services such as bathing, dressing and caring for skin and nails are available.
- Spiritual support and counseling are available to patients and family members.
- Medical Social Workers and hospice team members assist the family in understanding medical, financial, and human services options so that they can make the most appropriate decisions. Once

decisions are made they also help the family to navigate and negotiate their way through the organizations and processes.

- Many families are concerned about the cost of care- in virtually all instances, hospice services are covered by Medicaid, Medicare, and private insurers and health maintenance organizations. This coverage includes in-patient services when needed to control symptoms.
- Respite care is an important service that utilizes trained volunteers. A volunteer may take on a number of role or roles, for example: doing some shopping for the family who lacks the time or energy because of their care giving responsibilities; staying with the patient and monitoring conditions to allow the caregiver to take a break, keep appointments, do errands or simply get away for awhile; and by providing companionship and stimulation for the patient. Respite care can also include hospital stays where a patient is relocated to another location for professional care giving the caretaker up to a week off.
- Various complementary therapies such as physical or speech therapy are available as needed.

*Hospice of Northwest Michigan provides something extra \_\_\_\_*

Hospice team members add an extraordinary amount of caring, commitment and competence to their work. It's more than a paycheck and it's more than a job for these professionals. And whether it's a Volunteer or a Dr., an RN or an Administrative Assistant, a Home Health Worker or a Social Worker, they are all professionals with specialized hospice program skills, training and knowledge. Standardized performance measures support this assertion but, more importantly, ask your health care providers, friends and neighbors.

Within the local community there are many "unidentified members" of the Hospice Care Team. Residents support the program financially, promote hospice services and lend a helping hand to hospice families and those who have lost a loved one. Hospice of Northwest Michigan maintains a corps of 40 trained and managed volunteers that provide assistance to hospice patients and families. These volunteers have not only been trained but have undergone criminal background checks, drug testing and other verifications to provide their services. And time after time human services agencies, emergency services organizations, medical suppliers, pharmacists, churches and all types of businesses and individuals have helped out a hospice family when needed. This community support is vital because Hospice of Northwest Michigan is a small organization and community resource committed to providing customized, personal and committed care for area residents.