

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

When Choosing a Hospice



MISSOURI HOSPICE
& Palliative Care
Association

1. What are the hospice's admission policies and procedures? How well do these fit your unique needs?
2. From the very first phone call, does the agency project an attitude that is patient, caring, competent and confidence inspiring? Or do you hear a lot of jargon and conditions and restrictions?
3. If you are uncertain about whether hospice is right for you, what kinds of consultation or assessment will the agency offer to help sort out your uncertainty?
4. How quickly can the hospice initiate services?
5. What are the geographical boundaries or other limits to its services?
6. What are its policies on inpatient care and where is the inpatient care provided, if this should become necessary? How long can patients stay there? Can you tour the unit? Does the hospice contract with local nursing homes? Which ones?
7. Is participation in the care by a family caregiver required as a condition of hospice enrollment? What is expected from the family caregiver, and what can the hospice offer to supplement the family's responsibilities?
8. What is the hospice's past relationship with your personal physician? Can they work together effectively? Does the hospice medical director make home visits, when needed?
9. Who provides on-call coverage? What is the average wait to get your call answered when you have an after-hours emergency? How quickly can a nurse come to your home, if that is needed?
10. How often do the nurse, social worker and aide visit typically, and for how long each time? Is it usually the same person? What is the average caseload managed by each nurse?
11. How does the hospice define "palliative" treatments? Are certain treatments automatically excluded? If you require expensive high-technology therapies or devices to manage pain and other symptoms, will this be an issue?
12. What out-of-pocket expenses should you expect?

13. What hospitals and nursing homes does the hospice contract with for inpatient and respite care?

The questions and answers above are adapted with permission from "The Hospice Handbook: A Complete Guide," by Larry Beresford, published in 1993 by Little, Brown & Co. This book is still in print and can be ordered through most bookstores.