

## Things to Know About Hospice

*About Hospice-The 5 W's*, from **Hospice and Palliative Care Federation of Massachusetts**, is reprinted here with the generous permission of Christine McMichael, Executive Director.

[www.hospicefed.org](http://www.hospicefed.org)

### *About Hospice- The 5 W's*

#### WHO is eligible for hospice?

Hospice serves patients with a terminal illness resulting in a life expectancy of six months or less, as determined by the patient's physician. Care is provided regardless of diagnosis, age, gender, nationality, race, creed, sexual orientation, disability or ability to pay. The patient makes the decision to choose hospice in partnership with his or her family physician and the hospice team, after a thorough review of all the care options.

#### WHEN is it time for hospice?

When the goal of treatment begins to shift from curing the illness to providing comfort, it is time to consider hospice. This time may come well before a physician indicates that the patient's life expectancy is six months or less. Sadly, many people wait until their final days to involve hospice. By contacting hospice early in the diagnosis, the patient and family reserve time to understand their options and choose the path that will have the most positive impact on quality of life. The best time to learn about hospice is before you need it.

#### WHY should we choose hospice?

The decision to choose hospice is a very personal one. It directly involves the patient, family, physician and any loved ones who may serve as caregivers. Here are a few things you should consider. Hospice's expertise in palliative, or "comfort" care, assures the patient of state-of-the-art pain control and symptom management. Hospice enables patients to focus on living their remaining days fully, at home, among family and friends. This emphasis on family involvement - understanding that everyone's definition of "family" is unique - helps individuals to support each other during this time of life.

#### WHERE is hospice care provided?

Hospice care takes place in the home. For some, "home" may mean a house or an apartment. For others, it may be some form of extended care facility, such as a nursing home or assisted living residence. In addition, there are several hospice residences operating in Massachusetts exclusively for hospice patients. Regardless of your circumstance, the hospice team will come to you where you live.

Hospice patients who live in their own home often have the help of a family member or friend who serves as the "primary caregiver". This caregiver works closely with the hospice team to provide for the patient's daily needs. In extended care facilities, hospice teams create a partnership with the staff and family, just as they would with the family in the home.

Even if you move to another town or state, your hospice can make arrangements for you to receive hospice care from the provider in your new location.

In addition to home care, hospice provides short-term inpatient hospital care when necessary to manage the symptoms of the illness or to give the family a brief rest from the responsibilities of caregiving. During these times, the hospice team remains involved and helps the patient transition back to the home environment as quickly as possible.

### **WHAT makes hospice care unique?**

Hospice care centers around the patient and family. The goal of the professional hospice team is to empower you to make your own choices with its support and assistance. The team serves as your advocates, helping you to access the information and resources you need during this very challenging time.

In addition to providing the care directly, hospice team members serve as teachers, enabling the family to care for their loved one at home. Hospice recognizes that the family and caregivers need an extra measure of support both during and after their experience of caring for a terminally ill patient.

Read more about Hospice and Palliative Care Federation of Massachusetts and view their Hospice Locator at [www.hospicefed.org](http://www.hospicefed.org)