

The Hospice Decision Checklist

The questions to ask before enrolling with any hospice, and what to confirm in the first 72 hours. Print this. Bring it to the meeting. Asking questions is not confrontational. It is responsible.

Part 1 Before you choose: the 8 operational questions

All Medicare-certified hospices follow the same federal rules. They do not operate the same way. These questions reveal how an agency really runs.

☐ How often will the nurse visit, based on our current needs?

Answer: _____

☐ Will we have a dedicated case manager nurse? Who covers when that nurse is out?

Answer: _____

☐ What happens if symptoms worsen at night or on weekends?

Answer: _____

☐ Do you provide continuous care at home when medically necessary?

Answer: _____

☐ If inpatient symptom management is needed, where would it take place?

Answer: _____

☐ How are medications delivered after hours?

Answer: _____

☐ What is your typical response time for urgent calls?

Answer: _____

☐ How many patients does each nurse typically carry?

Answer: _____

Part 2 Before you sign: coverage and consent

You should not sign hospice paperwork without understanding how coverage works for your specific situation.

- ☐ We understand what Medicare covers at 100% (nursing, aides, comfort medications, equipment, supplies related to the diagnosis).
- ☐ We understand what hospice does NOT cover: room and board in a facility, 24-hour caregivers, and curative treatment.
- ☐ We asked how our specific insurance applies (Medicare, Medicare Advantage, Medicaid, or commercial).
- ☐ We know hospice can be revoked, transferred, or re-elected if circumstances change.
- ☐ We asked what medical changes made our family member eligible now.
- ☐ We were not pressured to sign on the first conversation. (You are allowed to slow this down.)

Part 3 Within the first 72 hours, you should know:

Hospice is structured care. Clarity is part of that structure. If you do not know these answers, it is appropriate to ask.

- ☐ Who our case manager nurse is, by name.
Name: _____
- ☐ How to reach hospice 24/7.
Number: _____
- ☐ Which symptoms require an immediate call.
- ☐ What the medication plan is, and what is in the comfort kit.
- ☐ Where inpatient care would occur if it were ever needed.

Part 4 Ask before you need them

Asking these questions does not cause anything to happen. It creates calm later.

- ☐ Have we documented the funeral home?
- ☐ What number do we call at the time of death? (Hospice, not 911.)
- ☐ How long does it usually take a nurse to arrive? What if it happens overnight?
- ☐ What happens to medications afterward, and how is equipment retrieved?
- ☐ Who completes the death certificate paperwork?

◆ The Hospice Guide · Clarity reduces fear.

Educational information only, not medical or legal advice. From the book *The Hospice Guide: Understanding Medicare Coverage, Eligibility, and What to Expect at End of Life*.