



Hospice Care for Veterans

Frequently Asked Questions

“You matter to the last moment of your life, and we will do all we can, not only to help you die peacefully, but to live until you die.”

-Dame Cicely Saunders, Founder of the first Hospice

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What is hospice care? Hospice (pronounced HAW-spiss) care is a special kind of care that an individual and their family or loved ones choose. Hospice care helps people with serious illnesses live their final months in comfort and dignity. Hospice care is special because it also helps the individual's family and caregivers.

How can hospice care help me and my family? Many families have little or no experience caring for someone who is dying. The hospice team can help you and your family or loved ones in many ways. For example, the hospice team provides comfort care to relieve pain and symptoms, offers emotional and spiritual support, teaches specific care techniques, arranges for necessary equipment and offers grief services.

When should I talk to my doctor about hospice? Ask your doctor and talk with your family about your care options and services, including hospice, in the early stages of a serious illness that can shorten your life. Hospice services can help you and your family for months, not just days.

Are there hospice programs for Veterans? Yes, there are. The VA has partnered with many community hospices. Some community hospices are members of the program, *We Honor Veterans*. The *We Honor Veterans* program recognizes your service as a Veteran and is sensitive to the unique needs you may have at the end of life.

Where can I receive hospice care? Wherever you call home. For example, a private home, an assisted living center, long-term care facility, hospital, group home, foster home or apartment dwelling.

What if I live alone or don't have family nearby? The hospice team can talk to you about choices for staying safe and comfortable in your home, even if you live alone. Hospice services may also be available in your region

through nursing home facilities or residential hospices and VA Contract Nursing Homes.

When is hospice care available to me?

The hospice team will talk to you and your family about how often you need regular visits and then schedule them. The hospice team itself does not provide 24-hour care, but can help make arrangements if that is what



you need. Hospice care includes access to a registered nurse who is on-call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for emergency situations.

How will I know if my loved one or I am eligible for hospice care? We recommend that you ask your doctor about all of your care choices—including hospice care — at any time during a life-limiting illness. Hospice programs normally accept patients who are referred by their doctor with a life-expectancy of 6 months or less. However, hospice care can be provided beyond 6 months if your doctor and the hospice team determine that the illness is still life-limiting.

Who pays for hospice? Hospice services are paid for by Medicare, Medical Assistance, MinnesotaCare and many private insurance companies. As a Veteran, you also have a VA benefit for end-of-life care. Your hospice program works with you and your family to identify ways to pay for services.

How do I find hospice services that offer the *We Honor Veterans* program?

The VA is a great resource. You can also visit the *We Honor Veterans* website, www.WeHonorVeterans.org, to find a hospice in your area that has a *We Honor Veterans* program.

How do I access my VA benefits for end-of-life care? In order to receive benefits you must be enrolled with the VA. If you are not enrolled, your hospice program can help you with the enrollment process.

How do I use my VA end-of-life care benefits? Contact the VA or your local community hospice provider. County Veterans Service Officers can also help Veterans and their families with local, state and federal Veterans benefits.

Can I choose to end hospice care once I have enrolled? Hospice care is always the choice of you and your family. If you would like to stop hospice care services at any point, that choice is yours. You always have the choice to re-enroll at a later date if you are still eligible.

Does hospice provide any support to the family after their loved one dies? Hospice provides grief support to the family for up to 13 months following the individual's death.

I am interested in learning more. What next? Contact the County Veterans Services Officer in your county to learn about your Veteran benefits. Contact Minnesota Network of Hospice & Palliative Care (MNHPC) to learn more about what to ask your doctor or to find a hospice with a *We Honor Veterans* program.

Contact MNHPC

Call (651) 917-4616 or visit www.mnhpc.org if you need additional help finding providers or if you have general questions about hospice care for you or your loved ones.

Hospice Care Resources for Veterans

MNHPC's "Choosing Hospice: A Consumers Guide" bit.ly/1K7XYZ7

LinkVet

1-888-LINKVET (546-5838) or
linkvet.custhelp.com

Minnesota Association County Veterans Service Officers

www.macvso.org

Stratis Health/ TRUE Hospice Project

"Elephant in the Exam Room" Wallet Card
bit.ly/1nmjAXo

VA Midwest Healthcare Network

www.visn23.va.gov

We Honor Veterans

www.WeHonorVeterans.org