How to Find a Good Hospice
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Most people are referred to hospice by their doctor. Patients, family members, even friends can also make referrals. If you're looking for a program, check with the national Hospice and Palliative Care Organization. But beware: More than half of the U.S. hospice programs are for-profit, according to Medicare figures and several recent news reports have highlighted problems at some of those programs.

Here's what we think you should look for in a hospice program:
• Not-for-profit status and 20 or more years of experience.
• Hospice-certified nurses and doctors on staff and 24-hours-per-day availability.
• Palliative care consultants who can begin care if you’re not yet ready for hospice.
• An inpatient unit, where patients can go if symptoms can’t be managed at home.
• Ability to provide care in nursing homes and assisted living residences.
• Medicare approval. That way, Medicare will cover services, including equipment and home health aides as needed, plus counseling and grief support for the patient and the family.

The National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO) developed questions to help you identify factors that may be important to you and your family when selecting a hospice. Mount Carmel Hospice’s response is highlighted below the question. Please contact us at 614-234-0220 with your questions about hospice care.

Is the hospice Medicare-Certified?
Most hospices are certified by Medicare, required to follow Medicare rules and regulations and allows you to receive hospice care as part of your Medicare/Medicaid coverage.
Mount Carmel Hospice has been certified since 1985.

Has the hospice been surveyed by a state or federal oversight agency in the last five years?
Ask when the last survey was, if any deficiencies were noted, and if they have they been resolved.
Mount Carmel Hospice is surveyed by Ohio Department of Health and CMS every three years. Hospice is accredited by The Joint Commission. The most recent survey was in 2014. Additionally, Hospice completes a standard-by-standard regulatory assessment every year between surveys.

Is the organization an NHPCO member and does it comply with all aspects of hospice programs?
Ask if the hospice is a current NHPCO member and if it complies with NHPCO Standards.
Mount Carmel Hospice has been an NHPCO member since 1990. We use NHPCO Standards as a guide to measure quality and best practices.
Is the hospice accredited by a national organization?
Several organizations accredit hospices, surveying them to ensure they meet quality standards. Hospices are not required to be accredited, but accreditation can be a reflection of its commitment to quality.

Hospice has been accredited by The Joint Commission since 1985. We are also a member of CAPC (Center to Advance Palliative Care), and we adhere to the Clinical Practice Standards that recognize palliative medicine (that includes hospice care) as a medical specialty with very specific guidelines and knowledge base.

What "extra" services does the hospice offer?
All hospices provide expert medical care, emotional and spiritual care, medical supplies and equipment, volunteers and grief support after the death of a loved one. Additionally, some hospices offer other services.

All Hospice services are based on the patient’s individual needs. Services include therapeutic massage, bereavement, pet therapy/visits, quality-of-life items, birthday and other recognitions and community palliative care services. Hospice is a strong continuum with our Palliative Care program, and we are one of only eight nationally recognized Palliative Care Leadership Centers (PCLC) with CAPC (Center to Advance Palliative Care).

How long has the hospice been operating in the community?
Again, length of time in the community may be important to you and your family.

Mount Carmel Hospice has been operating in the community since 1985.

How many patients at any one time are assigned to each hospice staff member who will be caring for the patient?
Some hospices assign a certain number of patients to each staff member and may be willing to share that information with you. That might influence your decision to receive care from a hospice.

Hospice has dedicated beds in three Mount Carmel hospitals to provide a higher level of care for symptom management. Hospice collaborates with extended care facilities to provide residential, respite and soon, inpatient care.

Does the hospice conduct a family evaluation survey?
Many hospices ask family members to complete a brief evaluation of their services after the death of a loved one. Ask for their most recent scores so you can see how previous patients and family members have rated their services.

Mount Carmel Hospice has participated in the Family Satisfaction Survey since 2004. Prior to that date, we designed and used our own survey. Results are available upon request.

Are clinical staff (physicians, nurses, social workers) certified or credentialed in hospice and palliative care?

Yes, physicians, nurses, social workers and administrators certified in hospice and palliative medicine.

What services do volunteers offer, and if requested, how quickly will a volunteer be available?
Volunteers can provide a variety of services. If you want a hospice volunteer, be sure to ask how quickly one can be assigned and how they match volunteers to meet your needs.

Volunteers have varied talents and skills for these services. These services include companionship visits, pet therapy, veteran-to-veteran companionship and caregiver support. Many times, it is through volunteer efforts that our hospice can provide unique “quality-of-life” items.

Will staff come to the home if there is a crisis at any time of the day or night or on weekends?
Who is available to make the home visit (nurses, doctors, social workers, chaplains)?

Hospice staff is available by phone to help you 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week. However, some hospices offer limited in-home support on nights and weekends, while others are able to send staff out to a patient’s home no matter when a crisis arises.

Patients have 24 hour access to nurses. We are always here – just a phone call away – and can connect with all members of the team.

If I need to go to a hospital or nursing home which ones does/doesn’t the hospice work with?
If you have a preferred hospital or know that you may need to go to a nursing home, it’s important to find out which ones the hospice has contracts with so they can continue to provide your hospice services in this different setting.

Mount Carmel Health System has three hospitals that care for our hospice patients. Hospice has dedicated beds in three Mount Carmel hospitals and has numerous contractual relationships with area extended care facilities. We are happy to provide you with a list.

What screening and type of training do hospice volunteers receive before they are placed with patients and families?
All volunteers must receive training or orientation about hospice care. Some hospices provide specialized training related to bereavement, pediatric care, nursing home care, etc.

Mount Carmel Hospice volunteers receive 24 hours of training and continual mentoring. Screening for potential Volunteers includes a personal interview, a criminal background and a reference check. Specialized volunteer services (vigil team, palliative care, Evergreen and bereavement) require additional training.

How quickly can the intake/admissions staff come to begin the admissions process? Is someone available at nights or on weekends?
Some hospices are able to begin the admissions process and have someone begin hospice services at night or on weekends.

Hospice accepts referrals 24-hours-a-day. Admissions occur 7-days-a-week and holidays.

What is the organization’s governance structure?
Whether or not the organization is a non-profit, for-profit, government, faith-based or part of a larger healthcare organization may be important to you and your family.

Mount Carmel Hospice is a non-profit hospice, faith-based and health system owned.

Is the hospice a We Honor Veterans Partner?
We Honor Veterans Partners have demonstrated their commitment to improving the care they provide to veterans and their family members.

Mount Carmel Hospice is a 4-star, Tier-4 level program. It is the first and currently only in Central Ohio.