

This checklist is a free downloadable PDF provided by SevenPonds. To learn more about selecting a hospice, visit sevenponds.com and explore Hospice & Palliative Care in the Learn About End-of-Life section.

This guide is designed to help you feel more confident and informed. You may print it and use it as a checklist when interviewing hospice providers and taking notes as you compare your options. This list was thoughtfully created by SevenPonds and was used by our founder when she selected a hospice for her father.

Questions to Ask When Choosing a Hospice

Name of Provider:

Name of Person Interviewed:

Contact Information:

General Services

1. Is your agency Medicare-certified?
2. Is your agency for-profit or nonprofit?
3. How long has your hospice been serving patients?
4. Is your agency faith-based, or do you provide spiritual care?
5. Do you have an inpatient facility if symptoms cannot be managed at home? If not, do you provide continuous care?

Response Times

1. How quickly will the hospice respond if the plan of care is not effectively controlling symptoms?
What is the typical response (e.g., home visit, phone guidance, prescription adjustment)?
2. How quickly will the hospice respond in an emergency?
3. What is the typical response time for after-hours calls (evenings, nights, weekends, and holidays)?
4. Will the hospice treat related conditions, such as urinary tract infections, or will the patient need care elsewhere?
5. How soon can we expect symptoms such as pain, anxiety, or shortness of breath to be controlled?

Hospice Staff & Volunteers

1. How quickly will a plan of care be developed?
2. Which staff members and volunteers will visit, and how long will visits typically last?
(Note: Some families prefer more privacy and fewer staff visits—if so, discuss this.)
3. Will the same nurse provide ongoing visits?

4. Do hospice staff members have specialized training or certifications in hospice or palliative care?
5. How many patients are assigned to each hospice nurse? (Nurse Julie recommends no more than 12–15 patients: hospicenursejulie.com.)

Medications & Supplies

1. Does your agency provide a hospital bed?
2. What medical supplies does hospice provide?
3. What supplies and/or medications, if any, will we need to obtain ourselves?
4. Does hospice deliver medications, or will we need to pick them up? If pickup is required, where?
5. Can I continue taking my current medications?
6. Do you provide medical cannabis to hospice patients in states where it is legal?

Family Involvement & Respite Care

1. What care are family members expected to provide?

2. How does your agency train and keep family members informed about the patient's condition?
3. How will family members be educated about what to expect as the illness progresses?
4. Will hospice staff provide training and ongoing guidance to family caregivers?
5. Does the hospice provide respite care for family caregivers? How often, and how is it arranged?
6. If inpatient care becomes necessary, how will the hospice manage that transition? How will family members be educated about what to expect as the illness progresses?
7. Does the hospice provide bereavement support? If so, how is it provided and by whom?

Quality of Care

1. How do you balance a patient's choice to go—or not go—to the hospital if needed?
2. Does the hospice report quality data to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Hospice Compare program? Is the hospice accredited by the Joint Commission or the Community

3. If we are unhappy with some aspect of care, how do we contact an administrator? Who specifically should we call?
4. How do you coordinate care with my doctor if I choose to continue seeing them?
(Federal law allows this while on hospice.)

Length of Care

1. How long can my loved one remain in hospice care?
2. Are patients ever discharged from hospice while still alive? Under what circumstances might that occur? (SevenPonds flags this as an important question, as it may raise ethical concerns—particularly if a patient is discharged close to death due to the financial burden of care not covered by Medicare.)

Costs

1. Excluding required co-pays, are there any hospice-related costs not covered by Medicare?
2. Will the agency accept my insurance?
3. How does the agency handle billing and payments?

Patient & Caregiver Satisfaction

1. Do you participate in the Medicare Family Caregiver Experience Survey? If so, how can we access the survey to provide feedback?
2. If you do not participate in the Medicare survey, how can we submit feedback or concerns?

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We hope this information is helpful. For more education and resources about end-of-life planning, visit sevenponds.com. If you have feedback or thoughts about this guide, we'd love to hear from you at wecare@sevenponds.com.

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