

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

*about*  
*Hospice*

FOR YOU  
OR A LOVED ONE



## What is Hospice?

Hospice is a medical program paid for by Medicare and most insurance. It is made up of different types of health care professionals (including your primary care doctor) who work together as a team to care for and support people with a serious illness that cannot be cured. The goal is to give comfort care in the home.

# Hospice

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## A DIFFICULT CHOICE FOR MAMA

*“...it was explained to me that hospice might be a good option for us because their goal would be to keep my mother comfortable and treat her pain.”*



“My mom, Vera, is from Freeport, Louisiana and has 1 daughter, that’s me, 2 grandchildren and 3 great grandchildren. She worked for many years as a head custodian with the LA Unified School District before she retired, and now she lives in a nursing facility. My mother has had hypertension, congestive heart failure, and some kidney problems for a while now but has also been ill for the last 5 years with Alzheimer’s. Now, the last 2 years have been really detrimental to my health, too. Her conditions affect me since I’m the total caregiver outside of the facility and me and my husband do all the visiting, getting there early, taking her out, all of that; I’m always doing something for my mom on a daily basis.



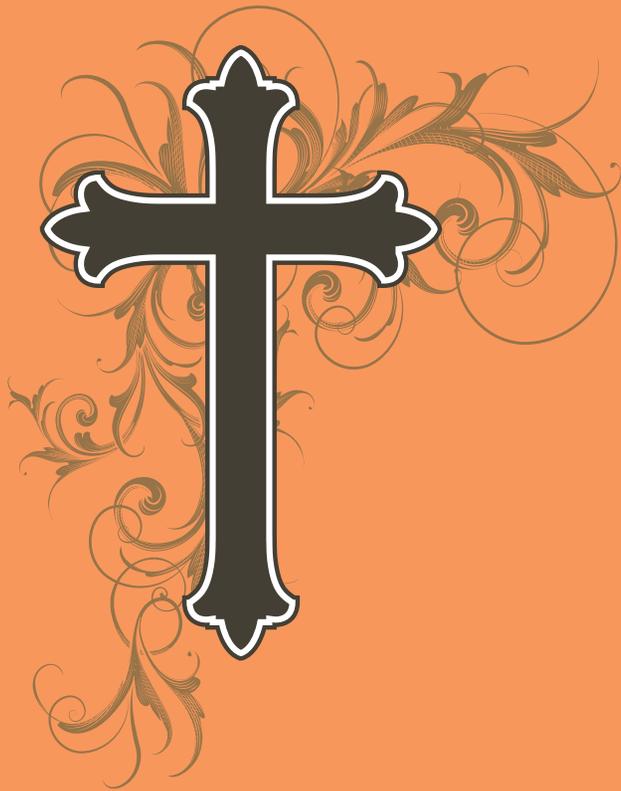
“My mom is now on hospice because she was going to the emergency room very frequently last year, and I spent many, many nights in the hospital with her. We were both so tired from rushing to the emergency room whenever she would have an episode,

and she was in terrible pain and very confused because of the Alzheimer’s. During our last emergency visit to the hospital, it was explained to me that hospice might be a good option for us because their goal would be to keep my mother comfortable and treat her pain. Honestly, I felt that hospice meant you were dying in the next few weeks or months, but while the doctors said that this was a possibility with end-stage Alzheimer’s patients, anything could happen. At this point, I knew that hospice was exactly what we needed right now.

“I thank the Lord that hospice comes out to see my mother in her own bed and I’m glad to hear that somebody is coming in every week to check on her, even though I sometimes think that all the new faces tap out her energy and patience. But above all, the very best thing about hospice is that they pay for all the medications and take care of my mom’s condition: I feel good about that and I’d much rather have hospice!” ■

## What can Hospice do for me?

- Manage pain and keep you comfortable
- Give emotional and spiritual support to you and your loved ones
- Pay for some medical supplies, equipment, and medications
- Teach your family how to care for you and meet your needs and wishes
- Bring in special care if needed (example: physical or music therapy)
- Give emotional support and counseling to your family and friends
- Offer 24-hour on-call services



## *A Conversation with Reverend Brent*

“ I was born in Franklin, Louisiana, lived in New Orleans, graduated high school there, went on to college, and then on to post-graduate school. I have a wife and 2 children...where's my wife?

*Mrs. Brent: I'm right here, darling.*

My mind is going, can you back me up?

*Mrs. Brent: We've been married for 40 years. Our son is 52 and we have a daughter who is 36 years old. We also have 3 grandchildren. My husband was a pastor for 42 years but is now retired.*

'Pastor' is a wonderful reason to live a low, low paying job. I'm a pastor now.

*Mrs. Brent: No you're not darling, you're retired. Well, my husband had his first heart attack about 10 years ago and has had 4 since then. He has an inoperable heart, asthma, high blood pressure, dementia, and is now totally blind. The heart doctor said that his heart will slow down until it just dies.*

*My husband's doctor first told us about hospice because he knew that at that point my husband couldn't do anything for himself, and he's getting weaker and weaker. I was devastated. I did suspect that things were that serious but to have the doctor come in and verbalize it, reality sets in and it's a whole different thing. Our son can hardly come in to see his daddy now, he's in total denial. We have relied on our religion and faith then and now, and it helps knowing that we are not alone.*

*It is very difficult to provide care for my husband because he hasn't been able to stand or do anything for himself for months. Hospice has someone come in to our home 3 days a week to do my husband's vitals, clean him up, and get him up and out of bed, and that has been extremely helpful. For some of the medications that my husband takes, I don't even have to pay for them or pick them up, either. We are not rich people, of course, so that helps.*

*Now that we've had the hospice program, I see that it helps you through the rough time of your life. I would certainly recommend hospice to other people because the best thing about it is that there is help available. ””*

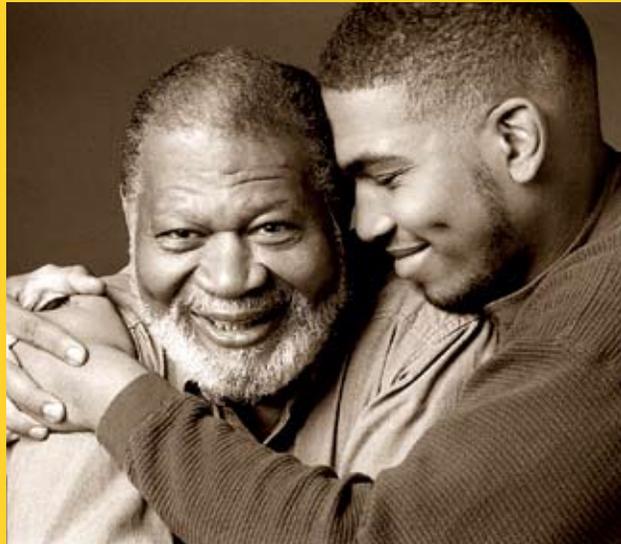


*“Now that we've had the hospice program, I see that it helps you through the rough time of your life.”*



# Hospice

CARE IN YOUR OWN HOME



*“...hospice care is not  
about getting better, they’re  
about comfort.”*

“My grandfather, John, was a wonderful, wonderful man who served in the Navy for 23 years, and I followed in his footsteps. He was a cook and chef in the Navy and then worked for the Los Angeles school district before retiring. He was married 50+ years, raised 3 children, and 5 grandchildren. He always took care of everyone, from his kids to his grandkids; even over the phone when I was many miles away! So when he got sick, my mother and I moved back from Missouri to take care of him.

“My grandfather got cancer in one kidney and had to have it removed. The other kidney was not working right anymore and was failing, so the doctors put him on dialysis. He was spending a lot of time layin’ down and that wasn’t typical of my grandfather; he was a man to get up and go, play poker, go to the casinos, and now he couldn’t do that type of thing anymore. He just got so tired of dialysis and didn’t want to go anymore. So he told his doctor and they recommended the hospice program. “Hospice was really nice because they came

and set up my grandfather’s room the way he wanted it, and we were provided our own nurse, a chaplain, and a hospital bed that my grandfather seemed to like because it could move up and down. Everyone was very nice but, you know, hospice care is not about getting better, they’re about comfort.

“I don’t have any medical background or anything so when hospice brought in all the stuff and set it up, it was like they were bringing the hospital to me. But I thought that if my grandfather needs to be in a hospital, why is he not there, you know, with the doctors? They made it very clear that it was about comfort and peacefulness for my grandfather, and I realized it was a good thing because he didn’t want to be in a hospital. I appreciate that they were able to care for my grandfather at home and make him comfortable in his final days and give all of us that last bit of calm together. I think this is the best thing about hospice and we all felt good knowing he was right there. And I know my grandfather felt more comfortable, too.” ■



# Hospice

MY STORY ABOUT HOSPICE



*“I thought being in hospice meant I’d be dead soon, but as far as I’m concerned, hospice has prolonged my life...”*

“My name is Samuel, and I was born in El Paso, Texas in 1927, and I moved to California in 1935. I’ve been here ever since I was 8 years of age, and I attended school here, junior high school, college, and now I’m retired from the City, where I maintained the grounds for every park in the city for 25 years. I’ve been married for fifty-some-odd years to the same lady, and we have 3 kids and 4 grandkids.

“My health was very, very good. I had a little high blood pressure but other than that, nothing until the sickness took over. I started smoking when I was 18 years old and in the service, and I smoked until I was in my 70’s. I quit when my doctor told me I had emphysema and well, it was explained to me that my lungs were in bad shape.

“When I first heard the word ‘hospice’ I thought, ‘I’ll be dead in 6 months.’ I had a friend that had cancer, and I found out that she was on hospice care. See, she died several years ago so I guess that’s why I associated hospice

with death. But for me, I was very sick and so I figured I’d try anything, you know?

“Turns out that hospice is very good care. The nurse comes out to the house once or twice a week, and then if something goes wrong, like I used to panic when I get short of breath and rush out to the hospital, now with hospice, they give me this number I can call anytime night or day and they tell me what to do and it makes me calm down so I don’t have to go to the hospital anymore. Oh, I’ve been very satisfied with the care, very much so.

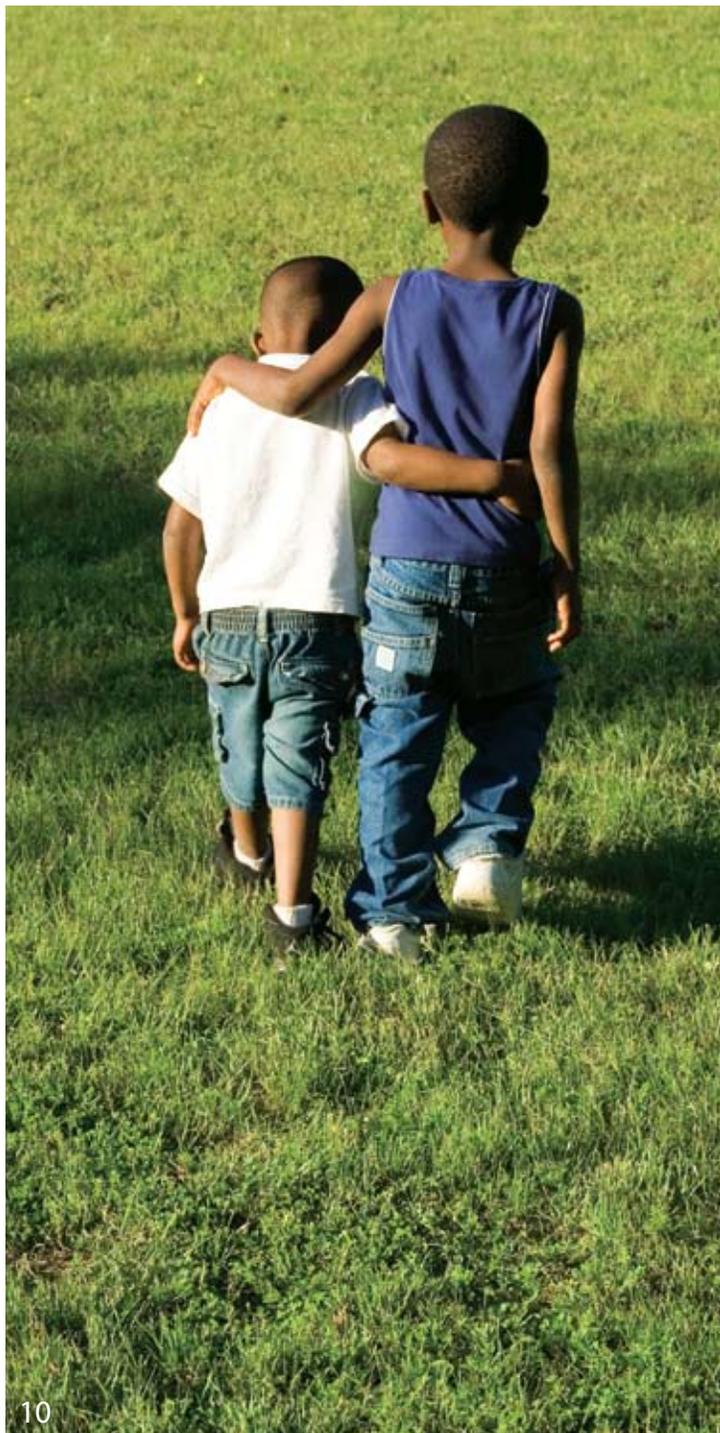
“I’m crazy about hospice because I really look forward to the care people coming out to my house, and I’m real satisfied when the doctor comes to see how things are going. The nurses are so upbeat and that keeps me upbeat, you know?

“I thought being in hospice meant I’d be dead soon, but as far as I’m concerned, hospice has prolonged my life, so I’m just very, very pleased that I found out about it.” ■

## Did you know that...

- Nearly all people (90%) in hospice programs receive care “at home”
- Hospice staff members are available **24-hours a day, 7 days per week, 52 weeks per year**
- More than 1.4 million patients received hospice services in a single year\*
- Most people want to spend their last days at home and 3 out of every 4 hospice patients are able to do this
- Medicare offers hospice care benefits to their patients
- Research has found that hospice patients live (on average) 1 month longer than other patients with a similar condition that did not choose hospice\*

\*National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization  
[www.nhpc.org](http://www.nhpc.org)



# Hospice

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EMOTIONAL & SPIRITUAL SUPPORT

*“Hospice provided us with all the things we needed.... we really didn’t have to do anything we weren’t comfortable with...”*

“I was glad to hear the word ‘hospice’ from my mother’s doctor because I knew of somebody else that was a patient in the program and they were very satisfied, comfortable, and didn’t suffer any. Yeah, hearing that word made me feel good.

“My name is Janelle, and my mother was a social worker and specialized in child services. She also loved to sing in the church choir and even opened her own restaurant. I guess age just caught up to her and she just started declining on her appetite. She became weak and the doctors determined that she should go into a nursing facility. At one point when she was living there, she was rushed to the hospital with pneumonia and a bladder infection, and she still wasn’t eating so the doctors recommended that she come home on hospice because she wasn’t doing well.

“The doctor gave us a clear picture about what to expect and what was going to take



place. Hospice provided us with all the things we needed, including oxygen, diapers, medicine, other equipment... everything. You know, I loved them for that because we really didn’t have to do anything we weren’t comfortable with or anything that was going to burden us because they provided us with everything; that’s why I agreed to hospice and their hospitality. And the nurses, someone was here everyday to check on my mom and make sure that my family and I were O.K.

“Hospice brought my mother home, and having her here was a load off my mind because I knew that she was glad to be at home, too. I didn’t have to feel guilty about her spending her last days in a hospital because she was right next to me at home.

“My mother was 93 years old when she passed away at home with hospice care. I can’t say anything bad about hospice, if I did, then I would be lying.” ■



For additional copies of this brochure, contact  
Partners in Care at (818) 837-3775,  
or go to [www.picf.org](http://www.picf.org) for a printable PDF.

## *Is hospice right for me?*

- |  | Yes                      | No                       |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| • I have a disease or injury that cannot be cured.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • I spend most of the day in bed or in a chair.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • I have to take pills for very bad physical, body pain.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • I have made a lot of trips to the emergency room in the past 6 months.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • My doctor has told me I have about 6 months left to live.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • I need help from other people with my daily activities like taking a shower, getting dressed, eating, cooking, walking, or getting out of bed. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • I have started feeling more tired and weak.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Without trying to, I have lost a lot of weight in the last 6 months  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

*If you answered "Yes" to 4 or more questions, you may want to **talk to your doctor** about hospice services and the many ways that hospice can help you and your loved ones at this important time.*

*Adapted from Hospice of Sacred Heart: Informal Hospice Eligibility Questionnaire.  
<http://www.hospicesacredheart.org/eligibility/>*



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