

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF A HOSPICE PATIENT'S PRIMARY CAREGIVER

If you have received this information, you are caring for someone who is seriously ill. The responsibility of being a primary caregiver can be overwhelming; we want you to know you are not alone in this journey. While you will be overseeing your loved one's care, the hospice team will provide regularly scheduled visits to help and support you.

What does it mean to be the primary caregiver of a hospice patient?

The services of the hospice team are not meant to take the place of the primary caregiver, but to supplement the care the patient already receives in their home or residential facility. The hospice team will provide education and support that will enable you to care for your loved one.

The responsibilities of the primary caregiver include:

- **Personal care of the patient**—Helping the patient stay clean and comfortable, such as assistance with bathing and going to the bathroom, applying lotion to dry skin, keeping teeth clean, shaving, washing and combing their hair, providing clean clothes and bed linens and making sure the nails on their hands and feet are trimmed.
- **Medications**—Ensuring prescriptions are filled and that correct dosages are given at the proper times. This can include anything from pills to syrups to patches to injections.
 - Hospice care means the focus of care will be on *comfort and pain relief* of the patient. Therefore, most of the care plan will be dedicated to the alleviation of symptoms rather than aggressively treating the cause.
 - Once the medications have been decided, the correct dosages will need to be calculated and a schedule will be developed based on these dosages. You will keep a medication log, provided to you in the hospice binder. These medications should ensure that the patient is as comfortable as possible to improve their quality of life as they spend time with family and friends.
- **Basic medical care**—taking their temperature, changing wound dressings, applying ice or heat, or taking blood pressure readings.
- **Medical equipment**—Utilizing and troubleshooting through challenges associated with medical equipment including, but not limited to oxygen machines, wheelchairs, lifts and hospital beds. Instruction on all equipment will be provided by the equipment company and the hospice care team.
- **Communication** – Contacting the Hospice Care Team for any concerns, for questions related to seeking treatment outside of the scope of Hospice Services, as outlined in the Consent for treatment, or in the event of an emergency.
- **Housing** – Ensuring appropriate housing, while not necessarily the responsibility of the primary caregiver, is the responsibility of the family. The hospice medical social worker can provide resources and support should changes need to be made in living arrangements.
- **Utilize the knowledge of the hospice team** - Taking full advantage of the hospice team members' visits and the knowledge they have will add to your confidence and comfort in caring for your loved one – they are a reliable source of education.

While you are providing moment to moment care, remember the hospice team is here for you and can be reached any time during the day or night for support, guidance and assistance.

Your signature is confirmation that your Hospice Clinician has reviewed your responsibilities as the designated Primary Caregiver, and you have accepted these responsibilities as outlined above.

Primary Caregiver: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____

Hospice Clinician: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____