



HOW TO TALK ABOUT HOSPICE

A Plain-Language Guide for Georgia Families and Care Teams

Hospice Care That Embraces Life

You do not need to have it all figured out to start this conversation.

You just need a question. We are here to help you find the answers.

Inside This Guide

- What hospice is and what it is not
- The difference between hospice and palliative care
- Signs it may be time to have this conversation
- How to bring it up with a loved one who is resistant
- Questions to ask any hospice provider before you decide
- What to expect in the first week of care
- A referral section for care teams and social workers

(404) 921-3341 | inspirehospice.com | Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

A Note Before You Begin

If you requested this guide, you are probably navigating something hard. Someone in your life is changing, and you are trying to figure out what to do next.

You do not need to have it all figured out to find this useful. Read what feels right. Skip what does not. And know that a real person at Inspire Hospice and Palliative Care is available to answer your questions whenever you are ready. No pressure, no obligation.

SECTION 1

You Do Not Have to Have It Figured Out to Start This Conversation

One of the most common things families tell us after starting hospice care is this:

"I wish we had called sooner."

Not because they made the wrong decision. They spent weeks, sometimes months, carrying the weight of uncertainty alone. Not knowing who to call or what to say.

The hospice conversation is hard to start. It can feel like giving up. It can feel disloyal. It can feel like you are making a decision that is not yours to make.

Remember:

- Starting the conversation is not a commitment.
- It is not a diagnosis or a death sentence.
- It is simply a way to understand your options, what your loved one wants, and how to make sure the days ahead are as comfortable and meaningful as possible.
- You are allowed to ask questions before you are ready to decide anything.

SECTION 2

What Hospice Actually Is and What It Is Not

There is a lot of confusion about hospice, and that confusion keeps families from getting support they could have had much earlier.

What Hospice Is

Hospice is a Medicare-certified, physician-directed program focused on comfort and quality of life for people with a serious illness who are no longer pursuing curative treatment. It is not one person. It is a full interdisciplinary team that includes:

- A **Registered Nurse** who manages symptoms and coordinates care
- A **Certified Nursing Aide** who assists with daily personal care
- A **Medical Social Worker** who supports practical and emotional needs
- A **Chaplain or Spiritual Care Coordinator** for spiritual support
- A **Hospice Physician** overseeing the medical plan of care

Hospice care is provided wherever the patient calls home: a private residence, a nursing facility, an assisted living community, or elsewhere.

What Hospice Is Not

- **Giving up.** It is choosing a different goal: comfort instead of cure.
- **Only for the last few days.** Patients can receive hospice care for six months or longer when a physician certifies it as appropriate.
- **Only for cancer.** Inspire serves patients with heart failure, COPD, dementia, kidney disease, neurological conditions, and many other serious diagnoses.
- **Stopping all medications.** Comfort-focused medications continue. Treatments unrelated to the hospice diagnosis may continue as well.
- **Permanent.** A patient can choose to leave hospice and return to curative treatment at any time.

Medicare Coverage Note: A patient qualifies for the Medicare Hospice Benefit when two physicians certify that the patient's life expectancy is six months or less if the illness follows its expected course, and the patient chooses comfort-focused care over curative treatment. Hospice is 100% covered by Medicare and Medicaid, with no out-of-pocket expense to the patient or family in most cases.

SECTION 3

Hospice and Palliative Care: Understanding the Difference

At Inspire Hospice and Palliative Care, we offer both services. Knowing the difference can help you understand where your family is in the journey and what kind of support is available right now.

| Palliative Care | Hospice Care |
|---|---|
| Available at any stage of a serious illness | For patients with a prognosis of six months or less |
| Can be provided alongside curative treatment | Focused on comfort rather than curative treatment |
| Focuses on relief from pain, symptoms, and stress | Focuses on comfort, quality of life, and family support |
| Helps patients and families make informed decisions | Provides a full interdisciplinary team in the home |
| A bridge to hospice when the time comes | Covered 100% by Medicare, Medicaid, and most insurance |

Not sure which applies to your situation? That is exactly the kind of question our team is here to answer. A conversation with us costs nothing and commits you to nothing.

SECTION 4

Signs It May Be Time to Have This Conversation

You do not need a hospice nurse to tell you something has shifted. Often, families already know.

| Physical Signs in the Patient | Caregiver and Family Signs |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequent hospitalizations or ER visits in the past six months | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You feel overwhelmed or unsure what to do next |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing difficulty eating, swallowing, or maintaining weight | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing medications or wound care without enough support |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant decline in strength, mobility, or daily function | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your loved one has expressed they do not want more aggressive treatment |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unmanaged or worsening pain, breathlessness, or fatigue | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More time managing symptoms than living life together |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A serious illness that is no longer responding to treatment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You have wondered whether hospice might help but felt unsure how to ask |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The physician has used phrases like "there is nothing more we can do" | |

If several of these resonate, it is worth a conversation, even just to understand your options.

SECTION 5

How to Bring It Up With a Loved One Who May Be Resistant

Knowing that hospice might help is one thing. Finding the words to bring it up with your parent, spouse, or sibling is another. Here are conversation-starting phrases families have found helpful. Use whatever feels natural to you.

If your loved one is resistant to the word 'hospice'

"I'm not asking you to decide anything. I just want us to learn together what our options are. Would you be willing to have someone come talk with us, just to answer some questions?"

If your loved one is afraid it means giving up

"The way I understand it, hospice is not about stopping. It is about making sure you are as comfortable as possible and that you have more support around you. That sounds like something worth learning more about."

If your loved one says they are not ready

"That is okay. I just want you to know I have been looking into it, and I think it could really help. There is no pressure. Can we just make one phone call together?"

If your loved one is bringing it up and you are not sure how to respond

"I hear you. I want to make sure we make this decision together. Can we talk about what matters most to you right now?"

There are no perfect words. What matters most is that the conversation happens with gentleness and honesty, not silence.

SECTION 6

Questions to Ask Any Hospice Provider Before You Decide

Not all hospice organizations are the same. Before you choose a provider, you have every right to ask questions. Here are the ones that matter most.

About the Team

- Who will be the primary nurse assigned to our case, and how often will they visit?
- Is there always someone available by phone, including nights and weekends?
- Will the same team members come consistently, or does the staff rotate frequently?

About Care and Responsiveness

- What happens if my loved one's pain becomes unmanaged at 2 a.m.?
- How quickly can you typically begin services after a referral?
- How do you communicate with our family physician throughout care?

About Coverage

- What is covered under the Medicare Hospice Benefit for our situation?
- Are there any services or medications that would not be covered?
- What equipment will be provided, and how quickly?

About the Organization

- How long has your team been providing hospice care in this area?
- What additional services do you offer beyond standard hospice care?
- Can I speak with a family who has used your services?

"A good hospice provider will welcome every one of these questions. If they hesitate, take note."

SECTION 7

What the First Week Looks Like

One of the biggest fears families have is that starting hospice will be chaotic or overwhelming. In most cases, the opposite is true.

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| <p>Days 1 to 2</p> | <p>An admissions nurse will visit to complete an assessment, review the care plan, and answer your questions. Medical equipment, including a hospital bed, wheelchair, or other needed items, is typically delivered within 24 to 48 hours. Medications for comfort will be ordered and delivered.</p> |
| <p>Days 3 to 5</p> | <p>Your assigned nurse and aide will begin their regular visit schedule. A social worker will reach out to discuss family needs, caregiver support, and any practical concerns. A chaplain or spiritual care coordinator may also visit, based on your family's wishes.</p> |
| <p>Throughout the First Week</p> | <p>You will have a direct phone number to reach your care team at any hour. Our innovative family communication app ensures all key family members stay informed and up to date. Someone is always available. You do not have to manage this alone.</p> |

What Is Included Throughout Care

Inspire Hospice and Palliative Care provides a comprehensive range of services designed to support the whole family, not just the patient.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-home nursing care with 24/7 RN availability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All medications, medical supplies, and equipment |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Symptom and pain management | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respite care to give family caregivers a break |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certified nursing aide for daily personal care | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music therapy, pet therapy, and aromatherapy |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expert physician oversight | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housekeeping assistance (vacuuming, laundry, meals) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced care planning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caregiver Coffee Break Program |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical social worker support | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovative family communication app |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chaplain and spiritual care | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous bedside care as needed |

- Bereavement counseling and follow-up support

- Inpatient care for intensive symptom management

SECTION 8

What Families Are Saying

Inspire Hospice and Palliative Care holds a 4.7-star rating across 30 Google reviews. Here is what some of the families we have served have shared.

★★★★★

"Inspire Hospice is the best. This is my third hospice experience and Inspire is so far above the others in caring and communication with the family. They always call back immediately, which is huge when dealing with hospice care."

— Tracy S.

★★★★★

"Inspire Hospice was so loving and tender in caring for my mother. All the staff working with us were very professional and skilled in their practice. I have been in the healthcare field for many decades and I was very impressed. You are all angels."

— Renee M.

★★★★★

"When I needed help at 4 a.m., someone was there for me. These are the most compassionate and wonderful people in the world. This time is never easy, but they are there for you."

— Thomas W.

★★★★★

"The nurses, aides, case managers, and chaplain were wonderful. They spent quality time answering questions and responded quickly when we needed them."

— Brenda Brown

★★★★★

"They have fantastic staff and a support team. I highly recommend reaching out to have those tough conversations. They will help you in these hard times."

— Rebecca E.

★★★★★

"Inspire Hospice has the friendliest and most knowledgeable staff. They take the time to listen to your questions and concerns."

— Candace T.

SECTION 9

For Care Teams and Referral Partners

If you are a physician, social worker, discharge planner, or other healthcare professional, this section is for you.

Referring a patient to hospice is one of the most meaningful things you can do for them and their family. Research consistently shows that patients who receive hospice care earlier report better quality of life, and their caregivers report significantly less emotional distress.

When to Consider a Hospice Referral

- The patient has a life-limiting diagnosis and is experiencing increasing functional decline
- Hospitalizations are becoming more frequent and less effective
- The patient or family has expressed a preference for comfort-focused goals
- Curative or disease-modifying treatment has been exhausted or declined
- The patient has a prognosis of six months or less if the illness follows its expected course

Common Diagnoses We Support

Advanced cancer, congestive heart failure, COPD, end-stage renal disease, dementia (including Alzheimer's), ALS, stroke, liver disease, and other serious conditions.

Making a Referral

Referring to Inspire Hospice and Palliative Care is simple. Call (404) 921-3341 or visit inspirehospice.com. We handle the intake process, communicate directly with your office, and keep you informed throughout the patient's care.

We serve patients across greater Atlanta and North Georgia, including Athens, Duluth, Gainesville, Kennesaw, Newnan, and surrounding communities.

Our Core Values

| Integrity | Compassion | Enthusiasm | Devotion | Collaboration |
|------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| Always doing the right thing | A strong desire to alleviate suffering | Creating positive energy every day | Sincerely dedicated to serving others | Supporting one another to deliver the best care |

"Every family we serve reminds us why this work matters. You trusted us with the most sacred season of your loved one's life, and we do not take that lightly. Our promise to every patient and every family is simple: we will show up, we will listen, and we will be there at any hour, any day. That is not a policy. It is who we are."

Ready to Talk? We Are Here.

You do not need to have a decision made to call us. You just need a question.

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inspirehospice.com

Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Serving families across Greater Atlanta and surrounding Georgia communities. Medicare, Medicaid, and most private insurance accepted. Coverage questions answered at no charge. Patient services are provided without regard to race, color, religion, age, sex, disability, or national origin.