

A Family Guide to Hospice Care

A practical introduction to Charity Hospice Care, the interdisciplinary team, and the support available to patients and caregivers.

Call	(310) 527-2962
Secure fax	(310) 527-2999
General email	hospice@charityhhs.org
Office	20300 South Vermont Ave., #130, Torrance, CA 90502

Call the hospice nurse first

For enrolled patients, an on-call hospice nurse is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Call when symptoms change, a medication is not working, a fall occurs, equipment is needed, or you are uncertain what to do. For an immediate medical emergency, call 911 and notify hospice.

How hospice begins

- Referral and clinical review: the team reviews the patient’s condition, recent changes, location, goals, and available records.
- Eligibility and election: a hospice physician determines eligibility and the patient or legal representative chooses hospice after services, rights, and coverage are explained.
- Assessment and plan: the nurse completes an assessment and the team builds an individualized plan of care.
- Coordination: the hospice arranges visits, medications, supplies, equipment, and after-hours support related to the terminal illness and related conditions.

Your Hospice Team

Each discipline contributes to one coordinated plan centered on comfort, dignity, safety, and the patient's goals.

Hospice physician and medical director

Review eligibility, guide symptom-management decisions, and oversee the medical plan of care.

Registered nurse case manager

Assesses symptoms, coordinates the plan, teaches caregivers, communicates with prescribers, and responds to changes.

Licensed vocational nurse

Provides ordered nursing care and reports findings and changes to the registered nurse and interdisciplinary team.

Hospice aide

Assists with personal care and comfort tasks under the plan of care and nursing supervision.

Social worker

Supports coping, planning, family communication, practical needs, and connections to community resources.

Spiritual counselor

Offers spiritual and emotional support consistent with the patient's beliefs and preferences.

Bereavement support

Provides grief education, supportive outreach, and resources for loved ones before and after a death.

Volunteers and other services

May provide companionship or practical support when available and included in the plan.

Medications, Equipment, and Safety

Your hospice team will explain what is included in the plan and whom to call before obtaining services related to the terminal illness.

Medication safety

Use the current medication instructions. Do not start, stop, crush, or change a dose unless directed by an authorized clinician. Keep medications secured and call if a medication is unavailable, refused, vomited, or ineffective.

Medical equipment and supplies

Hospice coordinates equipment and supplies identified in the plan of care. Call before replacing, returning, or obtaining related equipment elsewhere.

Falls and transfers

Use ordered equipment and assistance. Keep walkways clear, provide good lighting, and call hospice after any fall even when no injury is visible.

Emergency room and hospital care

Contact hospice before emergency-room care, hospitalization, ambulance transportation, or other services related to the terminal illness unless the situation is an immediate emergency.

Call hospice when you notice

- New or worsening pain, shortness of breath, agitation, nausea, vomiting, bleeding, fever, or confusion.
- A fall, injury, skin problem, swallowing difficulty, or sudden change in alertness.
- Difficulty providing medications, food, fluids, transfers, or personal care.
- Caregiver exhaustion, safety concerns, or uncertainty about the plan.

Patient and Family Rights

Charity Hospice Care will explain rights, responsibilities, coverage, complaint options, and how to reach the team.

- Participate in care planning and receive information in a way you can understand.
- Receive respectful care without discrimination and request language or communication assistance.
- Receive information about services, coverage, potential costs, and items the hospice determines are unrelated to the terminal illness.
- Raise concerns or complaints without retaliation.
- Review privacy practices and request access to health information as permitted by law.
- Choose or change an attending clinician and revoke hospice care, subject to applicable requirements.

Caregiver support and grief

Tell the team when caregiving feels physically or emotionally overwhelming. Ask about social-work support, respite options, community resources, spiritual care, and bereavement services. There is no single correct way or timeline to grieve.

This guide provides general education and does not replace the patient-specific plan of care, medication instructions, or advice from the hospice team.