



Care That Honors Life

A FAMILY GUIDE

Finding the Right *Hospice*

Choosing a hospice is one of the most important decisions a family makes. This guide walks you through it — the questions to ask, the credentials to confirm and the signs of a hospice that will care for the whole person and family.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Read it in order, or move straight to the questions that matter most to your family. Fill in the worksheet as you call each hospice, then save or print your notes — up to three agencies, side by side.

Eternal Life Hospice, Inc.

SERVING VENTURA AND LOS ANGELES COUNTIES

BEFORE YOU CHOOSE

Start on level ground

Every Medicare-certified hospice covers the same core benefit. Knowing what that benefit includes lets you focus on what truly sets agencies apart — how well they deliver it.

1

STEP ONE

Understand what every hospice covers

Hospice is a benefit under Medicare and most insurance plans, and its core is the same wherever you go: a Care Team of nurses, aides, a physician, a social worker and a chaplain; the medications, equipment and supplies related to the illness; and four levels of care that flex with need.

Those four levels are routine care at home, continuous nursing during a crisis, short inpatient care for symptoms that are hard to manage at home and respite care that gives family caregivers rest. Because the benefit is defined, the real question is not what a hospice covers. It is how well each one delivers it — and that is what the rest of this guide helps you see.

ASK

Can this agency provide all four levels of care when my family needs them — including continuous nursing in a crisis and inpatient care if symptoms become hard to manage at home?

2

STEP TWO

Confirm the three credentials

Three credentials show that an agency is meeting outside standards, not only its own. Confirm that each one is current and active:

- ☐ **Medicare certification** — the agency has passed federal survey and can bill Medicare for your care.
- ☐ **State license** — in California, every hospice is licensed by the Department of Public Health (CDPH).
- ☐ **Independent accreditation** — a voluntary review by an outside body such as ACHC, CHAP or The Joint Commission, held to a standard above the legal minimum.

Ask to have all three confirmed in writing. An agency that holds all three and shows them to you plainly is meeting a high bar before you have even asked.

3

STEP THREE

Ask about the medical care

Comfort in hospice rests on strong clinical care. Ask how the agency handles the medical side:

- ☐ Is the medical care directed by a physician experienced in hospice?
- ☐ How are pain and shortness of breath managed? How fast can the plan change when symptoms shift?
- ☐ When you call at 2 a.m., is it a nurse who can act or an answering service that takes a message? Round-the-clock availability is required; the difference is who picks up.
- ☐ How quickly can a nurse reach the home in a crisis?

A GOOD SIGN

The agency gives you a direct number and a clear answer about who is on call, day and night.

4

STEP FOUR

Ask about the people and the presence

The same hospice can feel very different depending on who shows up and how often. Ask:

- ☐ Will the same nurse and aide visit my family, or does the team rotate?
- ☐ How often will someone come, and does that increase as needs change?
- ☐ How quickly are calls and questions answered during the day?
- ☐ What grief support is offered to the family, and for how long afterward? Medicare-certified hospices support families for thirteen months — ask how they do it in practice.

A GOOD SIGN

Continuity — the same faces, returning, who already know your family's story.

5

STEP FIVE

Ask about comfort for the whole person

Medicine eases the body. A strong hospice also tends to the mind and the spirit. Ask what an agency offers beyond medication:

- Emotional and spiritual support — a social worker, a chaplain or a counselor, for the patient and the family.
- Trained volunteers for company, respite or small daily help.
- How will the team honor our family's cultural, language and religious needs — and are interpreters available if we need them?
- Comfort therapies such as music, gentle massage and aromatherapy, offered to ease distress and lift quality of life.

KEEP IN MIND

These comforts do not replace medical care. They surround it — so the days hold ease, presence and dignity, not treatment alone.

6

STEP SIX

Notice how they treat you from the first call

Some of the clearest signals come from the very first conversation.

SIGNS OF A STRONG HOSPICE

- ✓ Answers your questions plainly, without rushing you.
- ✓ Puts the plan, the costs and the credentials in writing.
- ✓ Explains the Medicare benefit clearly, with no pressure to decide.
- ✓ Can admit the same day when a family needs care now.
- ✓ Gives you a direct line and tells you exactly who is on call.

PAUSE AND ASK MORE IF

- ! You cannot get a clear answer about who responds after hours.
- ! You feel rushed, pressured or kept in the dark on cost.
- ! The agency will not confirm its license or accreditation.
- ! The visiting team keeps changing, with no one who knows your family.
- ! You are handed a contract before you have had time to read it.

Your notes, side by side

Keep this open as you speak with each hospice. Type what you learn, then save or print it to keep everything in one place.

These notes belong to the your family Date

What to ask each agency	Agency 1	Agency 2	Agency 3
Current Medicare certification?			
Current California (CDPH) license?			
Independent accreditation? (ACHC / CHAP / Joint Commission)			
Care directed by a hospice physician?			
Who answers after hours — nurse or service?			
Same Care Team at each visit?			
Same-day admission available?			
Comfort therapies offered?			
Honors cultural, language and faith needs?			
Grief support — for how long?			
How the first conversation felt			

DURING THE FIRST CALL, NOTE

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ They asked what matters most to our family | ☐ They explained the costs and the benefit clearly |
| ☐ They answered every question without rushing | ☐ They gave us a direct number and named who is on call |
| ☐ They respected our culture, language and faith | ☐ We felt heard and understood |

ABOUT THE AGENCY THAT MADE THIS GUIDE

How Eternal Life Hospice answers these questions

We wrote this guide from the same standard we hold inside our own walls. Eternal Life Hospice is *founder-led, independent and integrative* — built by someone who has sat at a hospice bedside as family, and who holds the agency to the four things that matter most.

Clinical Confidence

Physician-led care and a nurse on call 24/7, for symptoms managed with real depth.

Whole-Person Comfort

Care for the mind and spirit alongside the body, with comfort therapies that ease the hardest days.

Guided Presence

A consistent Care Team that returns to your home and walks each step beside your family.

Compliance-Led Care

The discipline of compliance beneath everything we do, so your family is protected at every level.

Here in Moments that Matter Most



CERTIFIED · ACCREDITED · 24/7 AVAILABILITY



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Care That
Honors Life

Agencies Providing Family Support

Advance directives and care planning, free in English and Spanish

CaringInfo.org

Understanding the hospice benefit and coverage

Medicare · 1.800.633.4227 · medicare.gov

Local help for older adults and caregivers

Eldercare Locator · 1.800.677.1116 · eldercare.acl.gov