

# HOW DO I CHOOSE a Hospice Care Provider?



Choosing a hospice care provider is one of the most important decisions a patient and their loved ones will ever make. Hospice care providers share similar goals for care: providing all of the physical, emotional, and spiritual support one needs for the time remaining when curative treatments are no longer possible or desired. However, hospice services provided can vary greatly; health care providers may provide recommendations.

# Hospice is about *living* people with a focus on *quality*

*The best hospice care is not about dying and death. It is about caring for **living** people with a focus on **quality**. It will relieve pain, preserve dignity, restore or provide a sense of peace (emotionally and spiritually), give back a sense of control, and assist with getting one's affairs in order – allowing patients and families to focus on a meaningful life during the journey with a life-limiting illness.*

The National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO) recommends considering the following factors when choosing a hospice care provider:

## **Is the hospice Medicare-certified?**

Hospice services are covered by Medicare. In order to utilize the Medicare Hospice Benefit and be reassured that a hospice adheres to Medicare's strict quality standards, the hospice one chooses must be certified by Medicare. Call 1-800-MEDICARE 24 hours a day, 7 days a week or visit [medicare.gov](https://www.medicare.gov) to find out for sure.

## **Excellence and accreditation**

*“Our ultimate goal, after all, is not a good death but a good life to the very end.”*

— **Atul Gawande,**

from his book *Being Mortal: Medicine and What Matters in the End*

Not every hospice is accredited by a national organization such as the Joint Commission to ensure they meet quality standards. **Accreditation is a voluntary step** and a sign of a hospice organization's commitment to excellence. It is attained only through an external evaluation by an independent third party that performs an expert assessment to ascertain if a hospice provider meets (*or exceeds*) established standards, and it demonstrates their practices ensure patients receive the best possible care. One can verify accreditation at [qualitycheck.org](http://qualitycheck.org).

#### Length of service

Ask how long a hospice organization has provided care. Experience matters!

#### Recently surveyed

It is important to know when a hospice organization was last surveyed by a state or federal oversight agency. Ask if there were any deficiencies found, and if so, they have been resolved.

#### Satisfaction with services

Satisfaction surveys (*family evaluations*) help hospice organizations assess quality of care and strive for excellence. It is helpful to know how a hospice care provider compares with national quality benchmarks. Ask if a hospice is participating with the Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (*CAHPS*) survey, which was required by Medicare beginning in 2015.

#### Responsiveness

How quickly a hospice organization can begin the admission process is a critical factor. It is important to ask if night and weekend admissions are offered.

#### On-call care availability

Emergencies do not happen according to a schedule, and it is important that one's needs can be met after hours and on weekends thanks to on-call hospice caregivers. Ask about the availability of on-call hospice staff, and if team members are available in the case of a medical emergency.

#### Inpatient care facilities

Most hospice patients receive care in their homes, but it is important to know if a hospice has a residential facility available as well, and to understand the admission criteria if the care needed is complex and/or providing care at home is not an option. It is important to know if a hospice has partner contracts (*such as with hospitals and nursing homes*) which determine if they can provide service in different settings.

#### Hospice-certified staff

Having team members who are hospice-credentialed or certified is a sign of care excellence. Be sure to ask about the staff's hospice-specific certification, which is crucial to receiving expert high quality hospice care.

## Volunteer services

Hospice volunteers offer a variety of services for the benefit of patients and families. It is important to ask about what volunteer services are offered, what kind of screening and training hospice volunteers must complete, how quickly one can be assigned and how they match one's needs.

**To see the complete checklist of questions to ask when considering a hospice provider, visit [nhpco.org](http://nhpco.org).**

For more information about hospice and Medicare, visit [Medicare.gov](http://Medicare.gov).

# About Alive Hospice

## Longevity

Tennessee's first and oldest hospice organization founded in 1975, and the third oldest in the United States. Serving 12 Middle Tennessee counties with a patient census averaging 400+ per day, our scope and long history provides collective knowledge by highly skilled clinical caregivers leading to unparalleled expertise.

## Nonprofit

A charitable 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization (*versus a for-profit company*), which provides services for all who need care regardless of their ability to pay. Donations from the community help us provide nearly \$1 million dollars in

charity care each year.

## Quality Standards

- Medicare-certified, accredited by the Joint Commission, and a recipient of the Gold Seal of Approval
- Staffed with hospice-certified/credentialed team members
- State-surveyed with no deficiencies, and exceeding national benchmarks for quality of care (*CAHPS*)

## Patient-Centered Care

- Admits patients 24/7, day or night (*including weekends*) and fully staffed with on-call physicians, nurses, social workers, and chaplains (*multifaith spiritual counselors*) in case of a crisis, including in the middle of the night and on weekends. Our Call Center is a resource for questions and provides an extra level of care in an emergency.
- Equipped with two inpatient hospice facilities (*Nashville and Madison*), soon to be 3. A residence in Murfreesboro is slated to open in 2017.
- Offers patients a variety of services and companionship provided by nearly 400 volunteers, including pet therapy, music therapy, keepsake audio recordings, hair care, and much more.

## Leadership

- **Alive is an innovative leader in hospice care:** As we follow and teach established best practices, we continually examine methods

leading to improvements, including defining and documenting them, and then we share new best practices with partners and health care professionals.

- **Alive is a thought leader:** Direct hospice care and grief support are two of our core services, along with one more: education about end-of-life care is the third pillar that comprises our mission. The **Alive Institute's mission** is to promote an environment of excellence and intellectual curiosity, and to serve as a vehicle by which Alive Hospice shares its considerable gifts to advance the field of hospice and palliative care through innovation, education, and advocacy.

### ☑ **Goes Above and Beyond to Serve the Community**

- Provides comprehensive Grief Support for the broader community: Most of the grief counseling provided (*around 95% of the cost*) is a charitable offering for the Middle Tennessee region. Of those receiving grief support, 40% did not have a loved one cared for by Alive Hospice.
- Has Middle Tennessee's only dedicated pediatric and perinatal hospice team
- Is a We Honor Veterans partner organization
- Is a Member of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization
- Provides more mission-focused charity care than any other hospice in Tennessee
- Is an Accredited Jewish Hospice

Polls have revealed that 9 in 10 adults would prefer to die in their homes, free of pain, surrounded by family and loved ones.

**Hospice works to make this happen.** All individuals deserve quality care at the end of life – it is a fundamental part of living. Hospice care is the model of high-quality, compassionate care that helps people and families live as fully as possible, and provides the care Americans have said they want.

### **Want more information?**

**Have a conversation with your doctor and your loved ones, and Alive Hospice welcomes your call at any time 24/7.** We will provide information and help you to make an informed decision.

# About Alive Hospice

Founded over 40 years ago in 1975, Alive Hospice is Middle Tennessee's oldest and largest hospice care provider, and offers the most comprehensive care for terminally ill patients and their families in the region. We are here to answer questions and serve as a resource for patients and their loved ones, health care professionals, and the community at large.

## Alive Hospice's Mission

We provide loving care to people with life-threatening illnesses, support to their families, and service to the community in a spirit of enriching lives.

*Alive Hospice is a 501(c)(3) charitable nonprofit health care provider licensed in the following counties: Bedford, Cannon, Cheatham, Coffee, Davidson, DeKalb, Dickson, Robertson, Rutherford, Sumner, Williamson, Wilson.*

*Alive Hospice is accredited by the Joint Commission and holds its Gold Seal of Approval. Additionally, Alive Hospice is accredited by the National Institute For Jewish Hospice. Alive Hospice is a Level 4 partner of the We Honor Veterans program in collaboration with the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.*



WE HONOR VETERANS



NIJH Accredited

Make the best of every day  
you are given

## Choose Alive Hospice

We welcome your call at any time – 24 hours  
a day, 7 days a week

**For more information, visit**

AliveHospice.org or call 615-327-1085

**TheGiftInitiative.org for Advance Care Planning**

*(All the Advance Care Planning documents you need  
in a packet which is downloadable)*



## Other brochures available include:

- *10 Things That May Surprise You About Hospice Care*
- *When is it Time? ... to consider Hospice Care*
- *Is there such a thing as "a good death"?*  
*HOSPICE CARE 101: Who and Where*

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# CONTACT US

## Alive Hospice Offices

### **Main Office:**

1718 Patterson St., Nashville, TN 37203

Main Phone (24/7): 615.327.1085

For admission information or Physician referrals:  
615.250.1348

### **Other Field Offices:**

Madison

Murfreesboro

## Dedicated Hospice Facilities

### **Nashville Residence** (30 beds)

1710 Patterson St., Nashville | 615-963-4800

### **TriStar Skyline Madison** (15 beds)

500 Hospital Dr., 2nd Fl, Madison | 615-860-6407

*(New Residence Coming Soon to Murfreesboro)*

**Note:** Over 90% of Alive Hospice's care is provided in private homes.

## Alive Hospice Grief Support

**Alive Hospice Griefline:** 615.963.4732

Grief support available at our Nashville, Madison and Murfreesboro Offices.

Youth Grief Camps in La Vergne, Murfreesboro, and White Bluff

[alivehospice.org](http://alivehospice.org)

