

SSM Health at Home Hospice Volunteering Information Review

Hospice Services and the Hospice Team

Hospice is a special type of care for those who have a terminal illness, a life expectancy of six months or less, and chosen to stop curative treatment. SSM Health at Home Hospice emphasizes preserving patients' dignity and improving their quality of life through symptom management – which includes relief from emotional, spiritual, and physical pain.

Hospice can be provided wherever a patient calls home, be it a private residence, assisted living, or long-term care facility. Patients may live alone but must have a caregiver who is willing to take on the role of needed support when the patient is no longer able to care for themselves.

Hospice not only cares for patients, but it also provides support for patient families. Spiritual and grief counselors are available to family members and other loved ones throughout the hospice period and bereavement services continue to be available for 13 months after the patient's death. Because volunteers experience the loss of hospice patients as well, spiritual and grief counselors are available to support volunteers if they are needed.

The hospice team is led by an RN case manager and may also include doctors, nurses, social workers, aides, spiritual and grief counselors, therapists – and you – the hospice volunteer. These members form the Interdisciplinary Group (IDG), the team responsible for caring for the needs of each hospice patient. It is important to remember that volunteers are an important and essential part of the hospice IDG team. Medicare requires that hospice agencies have a volunteer program that provides 5% of all patient care hours.

Confidentiality

Hospice volunteers are required to keep patient information confidential, sharing only necessary information with the hospice team. Confidential information includes anything that could identify a patient or link back to the patient or family. Confidential information includes, but is not limited to, name, address, phone number, medical information, and photos. Volunteers should never share information about a patient or their family with anyone outside the hospice team. This includes family, friends, and social media. Selfies with patients are not allowed as they are considered patient protected information.

Questions, Concerns, and Emergencies

The hospice team is always available if volunteers have questions or concerns. In the event you witness a fall, observe the patient has uncontrolled pain, you are asked a question you do not know how to answer, or are unsure of what to do in any situation, please call the hospice number at 877-356-4514. In the event an emergency occurs during a patient visit, act immediately and call 877-356-4514. Hospice staff will direct you on what to do.

Active Listening

The goal of a hospice volunteer visit is to be centered on the patient. Try to actively listen to patients. Make eye contact and give them time to formulate their thoughts and complete sentences. Allowing time for patients to reflect and remember are key parts of a visit. Please do not give out your personal

phone number to patients. Each patient and caregiver has been given the hospice number to call in the event they have a question or need.

Boundaries

Boundaries are professional ethics and limits maintained between volunteers and hospice patients/caregivers or staff members who they are working with. Boundaries can be innocently crossed due to a lack of understanding, wanting to help a patient more than the hospice program allows, or not understanding volunteers are part of a larger team whose members are qualified to help in those areas in which a patient has a need. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to stay within the clearly defined hospice roll and to know what a volunteer can and cannot do.

In the event a patient has a need outside of your role as a hospice volunteer or if you are uncertain what to do, call the hospice number at 877-356-4514. Hospice volunteers are not allowed to provide hands-on patient care. Volunteers should not give out personal contact information to patients or caregivers. Every hospice patient and their caregiver have been provided with the hospice number in the event they have a question or a need.