



CAROLINA
CARING

GUIDING YOU THROUGH THE UNEXPECTED: **Hospice and Palliative Care Essentials**



WHEN LIFE TAKES AN UNEXPECTED TURN, LET US BE YOUR GUIDING LIGHT

Finding meaning in each day can be a heavy burden when you or a loved one is facing a serious illness. In these moments of profound challenge, our goal at Carolina Caring is to lift the weight from your shoulders, allowing you to be the loving son or daughter you've always been. We are here to walk this path with you, providing the knowledge and support you need to make informed decisions and find peace in each moment.

As one of the first hospice and palliative care providers in North Carolina, Carolina Caring has been a trusted beacon of hope for decades. Serving 12 North Carolina counties, we offer world-class, compassionate hospice care and palliative medicine. Our mission is to ease the pain, manage symptoms, and create precious moments that will become cherished memories. With multiple levels of care and specialized programs tailored to meet diverse needs, we stand by you with unwavering support.

This ebook is a guide for caregivers and adult children navigating the journey of hospice care and serious illness. We are here to walk this path with you, providing the knowledge and support you need to make informed decisions and find peace in each moment with your loved one.

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CHAPTER 1

WHO IS CAROLINA & OUR MISSION

At Carolina Caring, we are a family of compassionate hearts, dedicated to uplifting the lives of those we serve. Our mission is simple yet profound: to provide world-class, compassionate care by engaging all individuals and their families to enhance living. We believe in the power of care that transcends physical boundaries and touches the very essence of the human spirit.



OUR VISION

Carolina Caring envisions a future where the advancement of palliative medicine, hospice, and end-of-life care leads to a world of comfort and dignity for all. We strive to be the most valued and preferred resource for patients, families, and partners in the communities we serve. Through innovation and continual learning, we aim to deliver world-class performance, both organizationally and individually.



OUR VALUES

Guided by principles that shape every interaction, we are committed to delivering exceptional care to everyone who needs us, wherever they live.

- **Service:** We create a care experience that exceeds ever-changing expectations, bringing comfort and joy to every moment.
- **Teamwork:** We care for each other with mutual respect and support, fostering a community of trust and collaboration.
- **Leadership:** We consistently give more than what is expected, embodying integrity, trust, and accountability in every action.
- **Respect:** We honor inclusive, culturally relevant care, recognizing the unique needs and values of every individual.
- **Excellence:** We inspire beyond accepted standards, striving for greatness in every aspect of our service.
- **Commitment:** We make a difference with our dedicated staff and volunteers, whose unwavering dedication brings light to the darkest moments.



Carolina Caring is here to walk alongside you, turning the journey of illness into one of connection, love, and profound care. Our mission is to be the beacon of hope and comfort, ensuring that each day is filled with meaning and each life is honored with the dignity it deserves.

CHAPTER 2

HOSPICE VS PALLIATIVE CARE: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE

What Is Hospice Care?

Hospice care is a compassionate embrace designed to enhance the quality of life for your loved one as they navigate their final days. This tender care typically lasts anywhere from 2 days to 2 weeks depending on their diagnosis or the rapid decline in their health. It offers profound comfort and unwavering support, allowing those facing a serious illness to find peace of mind in the ways that matter most to them. Whenever possible, hospice care is provided at home or wherever your loved one feels most at ease, creating a sanctuary of familiarity and love. Surrounded by the warmth of family and the serenity of their chosen environment, they can experience their final moments with dignity and grace.

In these precious days, hospice care becomes a bridge of compassion, connecting the patient and their family with a circle of care that honors their journey and celebrates their life. It is a gentle promise that even in the face of life's most challenging chapters, they are not alone.



What Is Palliative Medicine?

Palliative Medicine provides support for those facing the weight of a serious illness. It is a holistic approach designed to enhance the quality of life, offering a haven where comfort and dignity are paramount. This form of care addresses not just the physical symptoms but also the emotional, social, and spiritual struggles that accompany illness. Palliative care can last for months or even years after a diagnosis, providing sustained support through the entire journey.



Discovering the Best Path: Choosing the Right Care for Your Loved One

Though often thought to be one and the same, there are some fundamental differences between hospice care and palliative medicine, the most significant being timing. While hospice care is offered to individuals with a terminal prognosis and life expectancy of six months or less, palliative medicine can be provided at any stage of a serious illness.

The treatment goals also differ. While hospice care primarily focuses on comfort and quality of life, palliative medicine may include curative or life-prolonging therapies.

HOSPICE CARE VS. PALLIATIVE MEDICINE

Attribute	Hospice Care	Palliative Medicine
Timing	Typically offered to individuals with a terminal prognosis, usually with a life expectancy of six months or less	Can be provided at any stage of a serious illness, from the time of diagnosis onwards
Treatment Goals	Primarily focuses on comfort and quality of life, with the understanding that the illness is not curable	May include curative or life-prolonging therapies in addition to symptom management
Location of care	Often delivered in the patient's home, hospice facilities or nursing homes	Can be provided in various settings, including hospitals, outpatient clinics and the patient's home
Coverage & Payment	Typically covered by Medicare, Medicaid and most private insurance plans for individuals with a terminal prognosis	May be covered by insurance at various stages of illness
Scope of Services	Focuses specifically on end-of-life care, bereavement support and ensuring comfort and dignity in the final stages of life	Addresses a broad range of needs, including symptom management, communication and decision-making support, emotional and spiritual counseling and coordination of care



CHAPTER 3

HOSPICE CARE WITH CAROLINA CARING

Choosing hospice care is a deeply emotional decision. At Carolina Caring, from the moment hospice care begins, your loved one is surrounded by a circle of specialists dedicated to uplifting them in body, mind, and spirit. This compassionate team also embraces you and your family, recognizing that this journey touches everyone involved. With every touch and every word, hospice care fills your loved one's remaining days with dignity, comfort, and peace, allowing you to cherish the precious time you have together.

In addition to our comprehensive hospice services, we offer specialized care for those with COPD, cardiac conditions, dementia, and for our cherished veterans. Each specialty is tailored to meet the unique needs of your loved one, ensuring they receive the highest level of care and compassion throughout their journey.

Here's how hospice care can support you or your loved one:

- **Pain Management:**
 - Alleviating physical discomfort with medications like opioids and NSAIDs.
 - Non-pharmacological techniques such as massage therapy and meditation.
- **Symptom Management:**
 - Addressing symptoms like nausea, shortness of breath, fatigue, anxiety, depression, constipation, and insomnia.
 - Using a blend of pharmacological and non-pharmacological interventions.
- **Emotional and Psychological Support:**
 - Providing a space to process emotions with social workers and therapists.
 - Offering resources to help family members cope with caregiving, grief, and loss.
- **Spiritual Care:**
 - Helping patients navigate existential questions and spiritual concerns.
 - Facilitating religious practices and rituals, such as prayer sessions or reading from spiritual texts.
- **Assistance with Daily Activities:**
 - Helping with bathing, dressing, toileting, and eating.
 - Ensuring patients maintain comfort and dignity.



Carolina Caring Care Team May Include:

- **Physician:** Oversees medical care and pain management.
- **Nurse:** Provides hands-on care and coordinates treatment.
- **Nursing Assistant:** Assists with daily activities and personal care.
- **Social Worker:** Offers emotional support and resources.
- **Counselor:** Helps navigate the emotional landscape of illness and loss.
- **Volunteer:** Provides companionship and practical help.

Each member of this compassionate team is committed to ensuring that your loved one lives their remaining days with dignity, comfort, and peace. Hospice care acknowledges the profound impact of this journey on both the patient and their family, offering a sanctuary of support and understanding.

Who Qualifies for Hospice Care?

The Medicare Hospice Benefit (MHB) outlines who qualifies for hospice Medicare coverage.

According to the MHB, individuals qualify for coverage if they:

- Individuals eligible for Medicare Part A;
- Have a terminal illness with a life expectancy of six months or less;
- Elect to receive hospice care instead of curative treatment for their terminal illness and
- Receive care from a Medicare-approved hospice program.



Where Is Hospice Care Offered?

Many patients prefer to receive hospice care in the comfort of their own homes, surrounded by familiar surroundings and loved ones.

Carolina Caring offers home hospice care in:

- Alexander County
- Burke County
- Cabarrus County
- Caldwell County
- Catawba County
- Cleveland County
- Gaston County
- Iredell County
- Lincoln County
- McDowell County
- Mecklenburg County
- Rowan County

We also offer hospice at nursing homes, assisted living facilities, retirement centers, hospitals and our two inpatient facilities. Our Catawba Valley Hospice House is located in Newton, while our Sherrills Ford Hospice House is located just outside of Charlotte. Both facilities are designed to provide superlative medical care in a comfortable, home-like setting.

CHAPTER 4

PALLIATIVE CARE WITH CAROLINA CARING

Carolina Caring team members work closely with your loved one to manage and alleviate the physical symptoms of their illness, regardless of whether they are pursuing curative treatments. We understand that this journey impacts the whole family, and we are here to address social, emotional, and spiritual needs with compassion and respect.

Our team partners seamlessly with your loved one's doctor to complement the existing care plan. We add an extra layer of support, ensuring that all aspects of well-being are nurtured. The goals of palliative medicine are simple yet profound:

Enhancing Quality of Life: Alleviating symptoms to bring comfort and ease.

Empowering Informed Decisions: Assisting in making crucial medical choices with clarity and confidence.

Reducing Hospital Visits: Minimizing trips to the emergency room and decreasing hospitalizations.



GUIDING YOU THROUGH THE UNEXPECTED: HOSPICE AND PALLIATIVE CARE ESSENTIALS

With Carolina Caring, your loved one is embraced by a team dedicated to making each day a little brighter, and a little more manageable. Our palliative care is here to ensure they live with dignity, surrounded by love and support, every step of the way.

To achieve the goal of holistic well-being, a palliative medicine program may include a range of compassionate services:

- **Pain and Symptom Management:** Using both pharmacological and holistic methods, such as physical therapy, relaxation techniques, and nutrition, to bring relief and comfort.
- **Psychosocial Support:** Offering counseling, psychotherapy, support groups, and spiritual care to address emotional and mental health needs.
- **Assistance with Healthcare Preferences:** Helping document healthcare preferences, including advance directives, do-not-resuscitate orders, and durable power of attorney for healthcare decisions.
- **Support for Family Caregivers:** Providing education, training, respite care, and emotional support to those caring for their loved ones.

Where is Palliative Care Offered?

At Carolina Caring, we bring the gentle touch of palliative medicine to the comfort of your home or one of our outpatient clinic locations. We also extend our care to hospitals, assisted living centers, nursing homes, and six outpatient clinics located in China Grove, Gastonia, Huntersville, Morganton, Newton, and Sherrills Ford. Here, your loved one can find solace and comprehensive support, surrounded by a dedicated team committed to their well-being.

Palliative Care is offered in:

- Alexander County
- Burke County
- Cabarrus County
- Caldwell County
- Catawba County
- Cleveland County
- Gaston County
- Iredell County
- Lincoln County
- McDowell County
- Mecklenburg County
- Rowan County

CHAPTER 5

HOUSE CALLS: BRINGING COMPASSIONATE CARE HOME

In the quiet sanctuary of home, where memories linger and comfort is paramount, the House Calls Program extends a lifeline of compassionate care to those who face barriers to accessing routine medical services. For homebound individuals, our dedicated team brings primary care directly to their doorsteps, ensuring that health and well-being are never compromised by the inability to visit a clinic.



Extended Visit Times: Feeling Heard and Valued

- Visits range from 30 to 90 minutes
- Extended time enables us to manage chronic conditions, address acute illnesses, and promote overall well-being.
- Our goal is to help patients remain in the comfort of their homes for as long as possible.

Comprehensive Services: Care Without Compromise

House Calls offers many of the same services as a traditional primary care office but with the added convenience of home visits.

Our services include:

- **Chronic Disease Management:** Tailored care plans to manage ongoing health conditions.
- **Sick Visits:** Prompt treatment for acute illnesses.
- **Medication Management:** Ensuring safe and effective use of medications.
- **Flu Vaccinations:** Protecting patients from seasonal illnesses.

We also partner with other mobile agencies to provide lab draws and select radiology services at home, ensuring that all necessary care is within reach.



Always Accessible: Your Health, Our Priority

- Home visits for personalized care
- Virtual consultations for convenience
- 24/7 phone line for urgent needs after hours and on weekends

No Additional Fees: Care Without Financial Burden

- Billed as primary care office visits
- No convenience fee for homebound patients
- Covered by Medicare, Medicaid, and many private insurance plans
- Ensuring financial concerns do not hinder receiving necessary medical attention

Bringing Comfort and Care Together

- Health care that is compassionate, accessible, and personal
- Making every day easier, brighter, and more comfortable
- Every visit includes a touch of humanity and a listening ear
- A promise to care for you with utmost respect and dedication

Our House Calls Program serves both hospice and palliative care patients in their homes and in assisted-living communities, focusing on preventive care and overall wellness. Whether it's managing chronic conditions or treating acute illnesses like the common cold and flu, our goal is to provide comprehensive care that keeps patients where they feel safest and most at ease.

CHAPTER 6

NAVIGATING THE PATH AHEAD: NEXT STEPS

We understand that this is not the path you envisioned, and the weight of this reality can feel overwhelming. The initial shock and wave of emotions can be daunting, but you are not alone. Once you have established the need for hospice or palliative care, a compassionate team at Carolina Caring is ready to guide you through the intricacies of these services. Our dedicated professionals will work closely with you to craft a personalized care plan that addresses your loved one's physical, emotional, and spiritual needs.



GUIDING YOU THROUGH THE UNEXPECTED: HOSPICE AND PALLIATIVE CARE ESSENTIALS

Navigating the journey of caring for an adult with a serious or terminal illness is challenging. It's important to take proactive steps to ensure that your loved one receives the best care possible.

Below, we outline these crucial steps to help you manage this process with clarity and compassion.

The Next Steps Include:

Assembling a Support Team

- **Identify Key Members:**
 - Includes family members, close friends, and healthcare professionals.
 - Consider involving specialists, social workers, and spiritual advisors.
- **Delegate Responsibilities:**
 - Assign specific roles to each team member based on their strengths and expertise.
 - Ensure clear communication and regular updates among the team.
- **Seek Professional Guidance:**
 - Consult with a care coordinator to help organize and manage the support team.
 - Attend family meetings with healthcare providers to align on care plans and responsibilities.

Exploring Care Options

- **Research Available Services:**
 - Look into hospice and palliative care programs that specialize in adult care.
 - Consider in-home care versus facility-based care to determine the best fit for your family.
- **Evaluate Facilities and Providers:**
 - Visit care facilities and meet with potential providers to assess their approach and compatibility with your needs.
 - Ask about the specific services they offer, including pain management, emotional support, and respite care.
- **Review Financial Considerations:**
 - Understand what services are covered by insurance, Medicaid, or other financial assistance programs.
 - Discuss any out-of-pocket costs and payment plans with care providers.



Setting Goals that Honor Your Loved One's Journey

- **Establish Care Priorities:**
 - Define what is most important for your loved one's comfort and quality of life.
 - Involve your loved one (if appropriate) and family members in setting these priorities.
- **Create a Personalized Care Plan:**
 - Work with your healthcare team to develop a plan that addresses your loved one's physical, emotional, and spiritual needs.
 - Ensure the plan includes both short-term and long-term goals.
- **Regularly Review and Adjust Goals:**
 - Schedule regular check-ins with your support team to assess progress and make necessary adjustments.
 - Stay flexible and open to changes as your loved one's condition and needs evolve.

By following these steps, you can create a supportive, compassionate environment that honors your loved one's journey and ensures their comfort and well-being.



CHAPTER 7

WHAT SHOULD YOU BE PLANNING?

Carolina Caring understands that entering hospice care can be an overwhelming process, and you or your loved ones might feel uncertain about where to begin with estate planning, building a care plan, or managing other important documents you will need. To support you and your caregivers during this challenging time, we have created a comprehensive checklist designed to guide you through each step of the process, ensuring you have everything you need to feel prepared and at ease.



ESTATE PLANNING

1. Last Will and Testament

- Appoint a guardian for minor children
- Assign a guardian for your pets
- Inventory all personal property and determine the individuals or charities to receive each asset
- Designate an executor to implement the terms of your will

2. Adjustable Living Trust

- Itemize all personal property and decide which individuals or charities will inherit each asset
- Transfer your personal property into the trust
- Appoint a successor trustee to oversee your trust after your passing

3. Beneficiary Designations

- Identify a beneficiary for all non-probate assets, such as:
 - 401(k) and IRA accounts
 - Life insurance policies
 - Pensions

4. Durable Financial Power of Attorney

- Select a financial agent to make key financial decisions on your behalf
- Specify which financial decisions your agent is authorized to make
- Ensure your document states that the power of attorney is durable

5. Pet Trust

- Create and fund a trust for the care of your pets
- Appoint a successor trustee to manage the trust after your passing
- Assign a guardian for your pets
- Provide detailed instructions on how the funds should be used for your pet's care, including medical needs, preferred nutrition, and favorite toys



BUILD AN ADVANCED CARE PLAN

6. Durable Medical Power of Attorney

- Select a healthcare proxy to make crucial medical decisions on your behalf
- Define which medical choices your proxy is authorized to make
- Clearly state in your document that the power of attorney is durable

7. Living Will

- Detail your medical treatment preferences for your doctors and healthcare proxy to follow
- Share this document with your healthcare proxy to ensure they understand your wishes

8. Life Insurance

- Evaluate your age, expenses, and number of dependents to choose a plan with suitable coverage
- Review your policy every few years to see if your needs have changed

9. DNR and POLST Formsower of Attorney

- Typically used by individuals with serious health conditions or existing diagnoses
- Request your doctor to prepare a DNR
- Ask your doctor to document your end-of-life care preferences in POLST forms

Other Important Documents

10. End-of-Life Housing Arrangements

- Decide where you want to spend your final days, considering cost, convenience, and other factors
- Communicate your preferences with your loved ones so they understand your wishes

11. Instructions for Your Digital Assets

- Use a digital vault or password manager to securely store important logins and passwords, including keys to cryptocurrency wallets
- Appoint a digital executor in your will to manage your digital assets



12. Funeral Instructions and Preferences

- Specify your choice between burial, cremation, etc.
- Describe the type of service you prefer
- Identify preferred charities for donations
- Draft or outline your obituary
- Provide instructions for what should be inscribed on your tombstone

CHAPTER 8

EMBRACING THE ROLE OF CAREGIVER: FINDING STRENGTH

It's important to remember that many adult children and caregivers are uncertain about their loved ones' end-of-life preferences. Without the necessary documents, aggressive measures may be taken to prolong life. As a caregiver, this journey can be incredibly stressful. To care for your loved one, you must also take care of yourself.



Here are some tips to help you manage:

Take care of yourself:

- Ensure you get enough sleep, eat nutritious meals, and exercise regularly.
- Schedule regular health check-ups for yourself.
- Practice relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, meditation, or yoga.

Ask for and accept help:

- Reach out to family and friends for assistance with daily tasks.
- Join a caregiver support group to share experiences and gain support.
- Utilize respite care services to take breaks and recharge.

Look for humor:

- Share funny stories or watch comedies with your loved one to create moments of laughter.
- Keep a journal of humorous moments to reflect on during tough times.
- Find lighthearted activities that you and your loved one can enjoy together.

GUIDING YOU THROUGH THE UNEXPECTED: HOSPICE AND PALLIATIVE CARE ESSENTIALS



Get organized and prioritize:

- Create a daily or weekly schedule to manage tasks efficiently.
- Use a planner or digital app to keep track of appointments and medications.
- Delegate non-essential tasks to others to focus on what's most important.

Make use of community resources:

- Research local and online resources for caregivers, such as support groups and educational materials.
- Explore community programs that offer assistance, such as meal delivery or transportation services.
- Contact local health organizations for information on available caregiving resources and services.

In these challenging times, Carolina Caring stands by your side, offering the support and guidance you need. Our mission is to ease the burden on your shoulders, allowing you to remain a devoted son or daughter. Embrace the journey with us, finding strength and serenity in every step.

Seek Compassionate Support at Carolina Caring

Facing a serious, possibly life-limiting disease is never easy for you or a loved one. But you don't have to do it alone. At Carolina Caring, our interdisciplinary team of skilled professionals are here to make sure you receive the physical, emotional and social support you need to make the most of each and every day.

To learn more about how we can help you and your family during this difficult time, feel free to reach out. We can help you determine the best path forward.

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