



New Iberia – (337) 367-0940
Lafayette – (337) 237-9898

A Consumer Checklist for Hospice

Once you have found a hospice resource, your consumer homework begins. This list has been developed to help you evaluate your hospice options and avoid problems. Be ready with paper, pen, and plenty of questions. Ask:

About an Agency's Services and Structure

- Is it currently accredited, certified, and/or licensed for hospice? For what services? By what organization?
- Consumer follow-up: Confirm this information first hand with the organizations named.
- Does it have written statements outlining its services, eligibility criteria, costs, and payment procedures, employee job descriptions, malpractice, and liability insurance?
- Consumer follow-up: Ask for a copy of this material (any agency should provide it freely). Read it carefully.
- If limited services are available, what assistance can be provided to obtain other home care services as needed, such as home delivered meals?
- Consumer follow-up: Ask for the name of the agency person who will assist. Speak directly to him or her about actual help provided.
- Can it provide you with references from professionals, such as a hospital or community agency social workers, who have used this agency?
- Consumer follow-up: Ask for specific names and telephone numbers (a good agency will provide references on request). Talk to these people about their experiences. Also check with the Better Business Bureau, local Consumer Bureau, or the State Attorney General's office for information about their experience with the agency.

About an Agency's Plan of Care (Treatment of Services)

- Is the plan carefully and professionally developed with you and your family? Or is it based solely on your own view of the home situation and request for services?
- Consumer follow-up: Ask for a professional evaluation before contracting with the agency.
- Look for these clues to quality. The evaluation-
 - is done by an experienced registered nurse or social worker, not an agency clerk
 - is conducted in the home, not on the telephone
 - determines what you can do for yourself
 - includes consultation with family physicians and/or other professionals already providing you with health and social services. In addition (if you agree), other members of your family are consulted.

AAA Home Health and Hospice – 2114 Hwy. 14, New Iberia, LA 70560
www.aahomehealth.com



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- Once developed, is the plan of care written out? Are copies given to the workers in the home?
- Consumer follow-up: Ask for a copy of the plan of care. Check to see that it lists specific duties, work hours/days, and the name and telephone number of the supervisor in charge.
- When personnel report to the home, ask if they have seen the plan of care. If necessary, provide a copy and discuss each person's duties.

About the Personnel

- If you are dealing with an agency, are references required by the agency and are they on file?
- Consumer follow-up: Individual references cannot usually be verified because of employer/employee confidentiality. If this is the case, ask the agency how many references it requires. Any agency should require several references (two or more).

About Costs

- What are the hourly fees? Are there minimum hours per day or days per week required?
- Who pays for the employee's social security or other insurance? Are there any additional costs such as travel? For supervision or home evaluation? Medical supplies such as dressings? (Most quality agencies include supervision and evaluation in their fees.)
- How does the agency handle payment and billing?
- Consumer follow-up: Get all financial arrangements-costs, payment procedures, and billing in writing. Read the agreement carefully before signing. Be sure to keep a copy.