

Hines VA Hospice and Palliative Care Program: Services and Benefits

Hospice & Palliative Care Program Overview

Veterans with serious illness who are registered for VA health care are entitled to receive hospice and palliative care services under their VA benefits package.

The Hines **Palliative Care Consult Team (PCCT)** is an interdisciplinary team that provides consultation on the special needs of Veterans with serious illness who are considering palliative care or hospice services. The PCCT is responsible for evaluating and authorizing hospice services for Veterans who are in the community and wish to utilize their VA hospice benefits.

The VA does not directly provide hospice and palliative care services to Veterans residing in the community but instead purchases these services from community hospice and palliative care agencies.

VA Hospice Services:

- **Home Hospice:** Any VA provider can authorize home hospice or home palliative services. Services are reimbursed based on a bundled per diem package.
- **Hospice at a VA Contracted Nursing Home:** Hines VA will cover room and board charges at a VA-contracted nursing home for eligible Veterans utilizing their VA hospice benefit in the community. Contracts are extended for up to six months. Contracts must be re-evaluated for continued authorization.
- **Inpatient Hospice at Hines VA:** Hines houses a 15-bed inpatient hospice unit located in the Community Living Center, Building 217. It is reserved for Veterans in their last days to weeks of life. Admission is at the discretion of the Palliative Care Consult Team.
- **GIP/Continuous Care:** Hospice agencies may request an increased level of care for Veterans on their service, either at home under continuous care or at a general inpatient unit (GIP). Changes in levels of care must be authorized by the PCCT.
- **Homemaker/Home Health Aide (HHA) Services:** Veterans enrolled in home hospice services are eligible for up to 12 hours/week of in-home homemaker support. NOTE: this service is most appropriate for Veterans who are not imminently dying as it can take 1-2 weeks for services to begin from time of referral.
*****If the Veteran has an established VA care team,** the HHA request will go through the Veteran's Primary Care Team.

How to Facilitate a VA Referral for Hospice Benefits or Services:

1. Contact Alexi Vahlkamp or Virginia Bove to request evaluation for VA hospice benefits.
2. Fax records, using the Community Hospice Referral Checklist, to the PCCT Fax (708-202-2397), Attention: Alexi Vahlkamp or Virginia Bove.
3. The PCCT MD or NP will review the clinical records and make a determination regarding the Veteran's qualification for the requested service.
4. Alexi or Virginia will notify the requestor of the outcome of the review and provide guidance regarding next steps.

***Hospice reviews and authorizations generally take 1-3 business days.

What if a Veteran is not Registered at the VA?

If a Veteran has never established care at the VA, the Veteran or his/her family must register with the Hines Eligibility Department. Eligibility is based on time in service, service-connected disability, and income. Required documents include:

- 1010EZ (Enrollment Application for Health Benefits)
- Veteran's military discharge paperwork (DD 214)
- Picture ID (State ID and/or Driver's License)

We recommend that Veterans/families call Eligibility to ensure that they have all of the necessary paperwork before coming in to Hines or faxing documents to eligibility.

Important Hines VA Departments and Phone Numbers:

Billing: Palliative care and hospice billing issues are handled through the Billing Department at **866.260.2614**.

Community Care Department: Palliative care and hospice authorization letters and referrals are exclusively processed through the Community Care Department. Questions regarding authorizations should be directed to **708.202.8387 ext. 27200**.

Decedent Affairs: For questions relating to death benefits and burial information, please contact **708.202.8387 ext. 22503**.

Eligibility: In-person registration can be completed in the lobby of the main hospital at Hines. Questions regarding eligibility for VA health care can be directed to **708.202.8387 ext. 28838**.

Hospice and Palliative Care Program Coordinator: Alexi Vahlkamp – **708.202.2584**.

Palliative Care Social Worker: Virginia Bové – **708.202.4855**.

PCCT Fax: Requests for clinical review by the PCCT can be faxed to **708.202.2397**.