

About Us

The Alabama Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (AHPCO) was formed more than 40 years ago to advocate for and support hospice care providers in Alabama. Hospice providers grew from a few to currently there are multiple hospice providers serving each Alabama county. AHPCO has supported hospice providers through legislative and state level advocacy as well as excellent education programs.

Hospice Care is designed to serve patients with a terminal illness and an expected life expectancy of 6 months or less. While access to hospice has improved dramatically in the last four decades, there remains a misunderstanding of what hospice care is and when it should be provided.

With the onset of life prolonging interventions, the line between terminal and chronic illness is often blurred. Although prognostication is not an exact science, there are many factors that guide healthcare professionals to know when hospice care is an appropriate option of care. Either AHPCO or a local hospice provider can provide care determination information.

Your Resource

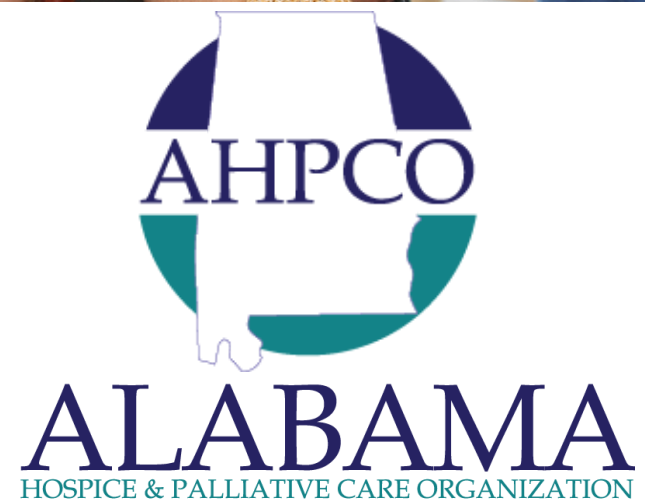
AHPCO and its members strive to be a resource available to anyone who has questions about end-of-life care options.

Our goal is to assist with advance care planning. AHPCO and its members can provide those resources to help physicians and those interested in advance care planning.

In addition, AHPCO members are professionals who are available to talk with patients and/or their loved ones, as well as medical professionals to educate on hospice and palliative care options in their county.

AHPCO's goal is to assist medical professionals navigate end-of-life care options for their patients and their families. Assistance is available to these professionals by providing resources on end-of-life care to assist them to gain confidence in having these difficult goals-of-care conversations. AHPCO's ultimate goal is to provide collaboration and support so that the highest quality end-of-life can be provided for all Alabama residents in need.

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Advance Care Planning

When directing the care of a patient with a potentially terminal disease, one of the most difficult but most important conversations a physician is responsible to have is about end-of-life and the patient's goals of care. These conversations may take a great deal of time and energy and should be documented in the patient's medical record and are covered by Medicare and many insurance plans

THE BEST WAY START EARLY

AHPCO advocates for Advance Care Planning conversations to be introduced early. We believe anyone who is 19 years or older should be encouraged to complete an advance directive naming a healthcare proxy – someone they trust to speak on their behalf if they were unable to communicate their healthcare wishes.



REVIEW OFTEN

As a patient's health changes over time, it is important to revisit advance care planning and to assess if the patient's goals of care have changed.

For instance, if diagnosed with a chronic illness, it is important to educate the patient /family to the expected effects of the illness over time, the curative interventions available as well as to the interventions that are beneficial when symptoms are more difficult to manage.

END OF LIFE CARE

When the disease reaches a terminal stage, this is another time their goals of care should be reviewed. This may be the time when this conversation can be more difficult, requiring time taken to be compassionate and tactfully honest to the reality of their situation.

“What are your goals?” (Does the patient want any and all available curative measure or do they want care to be focused on comfort and symptom relief?)

“Where would you like to be cared for?” (Does the patient want to be cared for in their home or a family member's home or a nursing facility? Do they want to continue having hospitalizations?)

“What does living as well as possible mean for you?” (Does the patient want hospitalizations and continued aggressive treatments or focus on comfort measures?)

No one can honor your health care wishes if they don't know what you want. Start the conversation now!