



Hospice Death with Dignity

SCOPE:

This policy applies to WhidbeyHealth Hospice.

PURPOSE:

To define WhidbeyHealth Hospice responsibility to patients who choose to use the Death with Dignity Act (RCW 70.245) while under the care of WhidbeyHealth Hospice.

DEFINITIONS:

1. RCW 70.245 is titled the “Death with Dignity Act”: It is Washington State Legislation that passed in 2006 which allows terminally ill Washington State residents to end their lives through the voluntary self-administration of lethal medications expressly prescribed by a physician for that purpose.
2. End of Life Washington: is a non-profit organization run by volunteers that counsel patients and families who seek end of life care, effective symptom management and the right to explore end of life options.

POLICY:

General Statement:

Hospice patients that request information on end-of-life choices will be encouraged to contact End of Life Washington who can assist the patient in exploring options according to RCW 70.245.

Physician Participation:

The WhidbeyHealth Hospice Medical Director (Hospice MD) may also discuss RCW 70.245 with the patient and family. The Hospice MD will not prescribe the life-ending dose of medication but can perform the duties of the “Consulting Physician.” These duties include a physical examination, written confirmation of diagnosis, prognosis, the ability to make an informed decision and voluntary decision making. This information is then provided to a physician, who per RCW 70.245.040 is considered or referred to as the “Attending Physician” for the purpose of obtaining the life ending medication prescription. The “Attending Physician” responsibilities are described in RCW 70.245.040.

Financial Considerations:

WhidbeyHealth Hospice will not be responsible for any of the costs associated with the DWD process. This includes the visit with the DWD attending MD (prescriber) or the prescribed life ending medications.

WhidbeyHealth Hospice Employee Participation:

WhidbeyHealth Hospice does not and shall not require that any WhidbeyHealth Hospice employee caring for patients be present for patient self-administration of a life ending dose of medication. If the patient requests the presence of a WhidbeyHealth Hospice employee during self-administration of a life ending dose of medication under RCW 70.245, and the employee is willing to be present, then the employee may be present but only if a volunteer from End of Life Washington is also in attendance. The WhidbeyHealth Hospice employee, if present, will not participate in preparing or administering the life ending medication.

INTERNAL RELATED DOCUMENTS:

N/A

EXTERNAL REFERENCES:**Laws/Regulations:**

1. WAC 246-978 Death with Dignity Act Requirements
2. RCW 70.245 The Washington Death with Dignity Act