



Death with Dignity Act/Initiative 1000 Hospital and its providers will not participate Policy and Procedure

Purpose

Sunnyside Community Hospital has elected to not participate in Initiative 1000 but is dedicated to providing our patients quality care; SCHC Providers have an obligation to openly discuss the patient's anxieties, unmet needs, feelings, and desires about the dying process and facilitate providing patient with outside resources and available options, including but not limited to comfort care, palliative care, hospice care, and pain control.

Ultimately, SCHC's goal is to help patients make informed decisions about end-of-life care

Audience

All Staff

Key Concepts and Terms

The definitions of terms under this policy shall be consistent with the definitions of terms in the Washington State Death with Dignity Act ("Act") and the future interpretations thereof.

Attending physician means the physician who has primary responsibility for the care of the patient and treatment of the patient's terminal disease.

Competent means that, in the opinion of a court or in the opinion of the patient's attending physician or consulting physician, psychiatrist, or psychologist, a patient has the ability to make and communicate an informed decision to health care providers, including communication through persons familiar with the patient's manner of communicating if those persons are available.

Consultation means performing the duties listed in Appendix A of this policy, including the duties of the attending physician, the consulting physician, and providing counseling in connection with the provision of life-ending medication.

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Consulting physician means a physician who is qualified by specialty or experience to make a professional diagnosis and prognosis regarding the patient's disease.

Counseling means one or more consultations as necessary between a state licensed psychiatrist or psychologist and a patient for the purpose of determining that the patient is competent and not suffering from psychiatric or psychological disorder or depression causing impaired judgment.

Dispensing means the act of providing drugs or medicines to a patient or his or her representative pursuant to a lawful prescription. Dispensing includes all SCH staff participation in obtaining or providing life- ending medications at the request of the patient.

Patient means a person who is under the care of a physician.

Prescribe means providing a written prescription to a patient for life ending medication in accordance with the requirements of the Act.

Provider means a person licensed, certified, or otherwise authorized or permitted by law to administer health care or dispense medication in the ordinary course of business or practice of a profession, and includes a health care facility. Physicians are included in this definition.

Informed decision means a decision by a qualified patient, to request and obtain a prescription for medication that the qualified patient may self-administer to end his or her life in a humane and dignified manner that is based on an appreciation of the relevant facts and after being fully informed by the attending physician of:

- His or her medical diagnosis;
- His or her prognosis;
- The potential risks associated with taking the medication to be prescribed;
- The probable result of taking the medication to be prescribed; and
- The feasible alternatives including, but not limited to, comfort care, hospice care, and pain control.

Physician means a doctor of medicine or osteopathy licensed to practice medicine in the state of Washington.

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Qualified patient means a competent adult over the age of 18 who is a resident of Washington State and has satisfied the requirements of the Act in order to obtain a prescription for medication that the qualified patient may self-administer to end his or her life in a humane and dignified manner.

Self-administer means a qualified patient's act of ingesting medication to end his or her life in a humane and dignified manner.

Policy

1. Washington law recognizes certain rights and responsibilities of qualified patients and health care providers under the Death with Dignity Act ("Act"). Under Washington law, a health care provider, including Sunnyside Community Hospital is not required to assist a qualified patient in ending that patient's life.
2. Sunnyside Community Hospital has chosen to not participate under the Death with Dignity Act. This means that in the performance of their duties, Sunnyside Community Hospital physicians, employees, independent contractors and volunteers shall not assist a patient in ending the patient's life under the Act. In addition, no provider may participate on the premises of the hospital or in property owned by the hospital.
3. No patient will be denied other medical care or treatment because of the patient's participation under the Act. The patient will be treated in the same manner as all other Sunnyside Community Hospital patients. The appropriate standard of care will be followed.
4. Any patient wishing to receive life-ending medication while a patient at this hospital will be assisted in transfer to another facility of the patient's choice. The transfer will assure continuity of care.
5. All providers at Sunnyside Community Hospital are expected to respond to any patient's query about life-ending medication with openness and compassion. Sunnyside Community Hospital believes our providers have an obligation to openly discuss the patient's concerns, unmet needs, feelings, and desires about the dying process. Providers should seek to learn the meaning behind the patient's questions and help the patient understand the range of available options, including but not limited to comfort care, hospice care, and pain control. Ultimately, Sunnyside Community Hospital's goal is to help patients make informed decisions about end-of-life care.

Procedure

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1. All patients will be provided with educational materials about end-of-life options. These materials will include a statement that Sunnyside Community Hospital does not participate in the Act.

2. If, as a result of learning of Sunnyside Community Hospital's decision not to participate in the Act, the patient wishes to have care transferred to another hospital of the patient's choice, Sunnyside Community Hospital staff will assist in making arrangements for the transfer. If the patient wishes to remain at Sunnyside Community Hospital, staff will discuss what end of life care will be provided consistent with hospital policy.

3. If a patient requests a referral to a physician who will fully participate under the Act or expresses the desire to take medication that will result in the patient's death, the provider may choose to provide the patient with a referral, or may instruct the patient that he or she must find a participating provider on his or her own. The relevant medical records will be transferred to the physician taking over the patient's care. The patient's primary clinical care giver (nurse or social worker) will be responsible for:
 - a. Informing the patient's attending physician as soon as possible, and no longer than one working day, that the patient wishes to take life-ending medications.

 - b. Ensuring that the medical record is complete and all required documentation is included. A copy of the Resuscitation Status (DNR) order, copies of advance directives, and POLST form are to be included.

 - c. Communicating with other clinicians involved with the patient to ensure continuity of care.

 - d. Documenting all communication in the patient's medical record.

4. Nothing in this policy prevents a physician or provider from making an initial determination that the patient has a terminal disease and informing the patient of the medical prognosis.

5. Nothing in this policy prevents a physician or provider from providing information about the "Washington State Death with Dignity Act" to a patient when the patient requests information.

6. Nothing in this policy prohibits a physician who is employed by or who is an independent contractor of Sunnyside Community Hospital from participating under the Act when not functioning within the scope of his or her capacity as an employee or independent contractor of Sunnyside Community Hospital.

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SANCTIONS

If a provider participates in the Act beyond what is allowed in the policy, Sunnyside Community Hospital may impose sanctions on that provider. Sunnyside Community Hospital shall follow due process procedures provided for in the medical staff bylaws. Sanctions may include:

- Loss of medical staff privileges;
- Loss of membership;
- Restriction from provider panel;
- Termination of lease or other property contract
- Termination of contracts;

Implementation/Education Plan

Review yearly with staff in skills lab and required read in Policy Tech

Related Documents

N/A

References

Laws/Regulations:

Initiative 1000/Washington Death with Dignity Act

Washington State Department of Health Regulations Chapter 246-978 WAC (Currently at CR-102 stage)

RCW 70.245 The Washington Death with Dignity Act