



Florida Consumers Have New Comparison Tool to Evaluate Hospice Providers

*AHCA and FHPC Partner to Release Information Detailing
Quality of Care, Satisfaction*

TALLAHASSEE – April 21, 2009 – Florida consumers now will have access to, in-depth information to help them compare and evaluate multiple factors when making decisions about selecting a hospice provider for end-of-life care.

In a voluntary effort, Florida Hospices and Palliative Care (FHPC) today announced the results from the Family Evaluation of Hospice Care (FEHC) survey, sent to families whose loved one received hospice care. The first of its kind in the country, this groundbreaking initiative was conducted in cooperation with The Agency for Healthcare Administration (AHCA).

The FEHC is a post-death survey that has been offered nationally to hospices by the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization since 2003. The survey assesses multiple areas of delivery of quality of care and is used by hospices throughout the U.S. to improve the effectiveness of hospice programs. This survey tool is the product of a collaborative effort between NHPCO and Brown University Medical School's Center for Gerontology and Healthcare Research.

The FEHC survey evaluated such elements as patient comfort and emotional support, coordination of care, shared decision making, provision of information, respect for the patient and provision of emotional support to the family at every hospice across the state.

"FHPC is dedicated to removing barriers that could impede access to hospice care and providing information and education to the general public about the availability and quality of hospice care," said Paul A. Ledford, executive director of Florida Hospices and Palliative Care. "By releasing the results from these independent assessments, our members are opening the doors for Florida's hospice consumers to learn all they can to make the most informed decision possible for their loved one."

While the independent assessments were provided by FHPC's consumers, AHCA released the results of this joint collaboration. "We applaud Florida's hospices for being proactive in providing information on consumer satisfaction and quality", said Holly Benson, Secretary of the Agency for Health Care Administration. "The addition of hospice data to FloridaHealthFinder.gov gives consumers one more health care decision making tool, and I know it will be valuable as they make important decisions about quality care for themselves and their families."

Commenting on the survey, J. Donald Schumacher, president and CEO of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization said, "Those of us who work in hospice and palliative care are dedicated to improving end-of-life care for the patients and family members we serve. We are very pleased that Florida is the first state organization to use the survey to augment the amount of information Florida consumers have access to and that will enhance their entire experience with hospice."

The comparison results were compiled from January through December 2008. Family members were asked to evaluate the care provided to the patient, as well as their own hospice experience. Available online on at www.FloridaHealthFinder.gov, the results are searchable by hospice provider name or county. "FHPC and AHCA recognize the value of transparency in health care information for consumers who are considering care decisions. As providers we must be accountable for delivering the results that patients, families, and those who regulate and pay for hospice care expect," said Anthony Palumbo, chief executive officer of Hospice of Citrus County and Hospice of the Nature Coast, and president of Florida Hospices and Palliative Care. "Florida's hospices have demonstrated leadership in quality and innovation, and offer a standard of hospice care that is among the highest in the nation. We are pleased to share our results and believe this effort will increase access to, and confidence in, hospice care for Floridians. We believe that those who view and use this information will find it an essential and helpful part of their information gathering as they approach one of the most important care decisions that a patient and family can make."

The Agency for Health Care Administration is committed to better health care for all Floridians. AHCA administers Florida's Medicaid program, licenses and regulates more than 32,000 health care facilities and 37 health maintenance organizations, and promotes the exchange of and publishes health care information and statistics. For more information, please visit <http://ahca.myflorida.com>.

Florida Hospices and Palliative Care (FHPC) is a not-for-profit, IRS Section 501(c) (3) organization representing Florida's hospice programs. The mission of FHPC is to assure excellence and access to hospice care, and advocate for the needs of those in the final phases of life. For more information, please visit <http://www.floridahospices.org/>

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