What Can You Do to Help?

You can help prevent hospice fraud by being aware and recognizing the warning signs. This will help protect vulnerable patients and make sure they receive quality and ethical care during their end-of-life journey. Below are examples of fraud that you should report.

- **Free Services**

Medicare does not pay for services such as housekeeping and cooking. Hospice companies offering these services as free are a fraud.

- **Gifts**

Companies offering "freebies," such as bus coupons, medical equipment, or food supplements, are frauds.

- **Loss of Care**

If you or a loved one has lost access to doctors or curative treatment like medicine or medical equipment, you may have been fraudulently signed up for hospice.

Please report any suspected hospice fraud to the agencies listed on the back of this brochure.

California Department of Justice
Division of Medi-Cal Fraud and Elder Abuse
Hotline: (800) 722-0432
http://oag.ca.gov/dmfea

California Department of Public Health
Licensing and Certification Program
https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CHCQ/LCP/Pages/LandCProgramHome.aspx
Call Center: (833) 422-4255

California Department of Social Services Reporting
https://www.cdss.ca.gov/reporting/report-fraud
Adult Protective Services: (833) 401-0832

California Long-Term Care Ombudsman Services
CRISIS Line: (800) 231-4024

If you suspect hospice fraud, please contact us at:

Division of Medi-Cal Fraud and Elder Abuse
P.O. Box 944255
Sacramento, CA 94244-2550
Phone: (916) 559-6180
Email: *DMFEAoutreach@doj.ca.gov*

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DMFEA WEBSITE

INVESTIGATE PROSECUTE PROTECT

DMFEA

Division of Medi-Cal Fraud & Elder Abuse

State of California Department of Justice



HOSPICE FRAUD

What You Should Know

What is Hospice Care?

Hospice care provides multidisciplinary care to terminally ill patients with a life-expectancy of six months or less. The goals of hospice care focus on comfort measures and relief of pain rather than cure of the underlying disease. Hospice care can be provided in various settings such as a patient's home, in a nursing home, at the hospital or at a specialized hospice center. To be eligible, a patient must have a terminal illness with a life expectancy of six months or less. Hospice care generally includes nursing and aide services, medications, and supplies.

What is Hospice Fraud?

Hospice fraud involves intentionally deceptive practices by hospice providers to exploit the healthcare system for financial gain.

These practices can include:

- Charging for services that were not provided.
- Billing for services that are not needed.
- Offering money or gifts to receive patient referrals.

These dishonest actions waste taxpayer money and harm patients who are falsely enrolled in hospice by losing access to specialists and prescriptions. Hospice fraud can show up in different ways, like when there are suddenly a lot of new hospice agencies in one area or high rates of patients being discharged alive despite being classified as terminally ill.



RECOGNIZING

The Warning Signs

What are the signs of fraud?

Unnecessary Services
Be cautious if a hospice provider recommends unnecessary treatment, medications, or services that do not meet the patient's needs.

Billing Errors
Review billing statements for inconsistencies, duplicate charges, or services not provided. Question any suspicious charges or billing practices.

Pressure to Sign
Watch out for aggressive tactics or pressure to sign documents quickly, especially regarding hospice care agreements or financial forms.

Lack of Transparency about Costs
Be wary if the hospice provider is not transparent about services, costs, or billing practices. Request detailed explanations and documentation for all services rendered.

Quality of Care
Pay attention to the quality of care provided to the patient.

Referral Kickbacks
Be cautious if the hospice provider offers money or gifts to enroll in hospice care or refer friends and family for hospice services.

Hospice Jumping
Question being discharged and admitted to multiple hospices, and being on hospice for long periods of time (a year or more).

Frequent Changes in Care Plans
Question frequent changes in the patient's care plan or services without valid reasons. Verify any modifications with the healthcare team.

Staff Turnover
If there are many different caregivers or staff members keep leaving, it might be a sign that something is wrong within the hospice organization.

Lack of Documentation
Ensure that all care services provided are documented accurately and that you receive copies of all relevant documents and care plans.

Unresponsive to Concerns
If the hospice provider is unresponsive to your questions, concerns, or requests for information, consider seeking care from a provider who is more open and willing to communicate.