

**SHCC Public Hearing Presentation Comments for  
Adjusted Need Determination for Hospice  
Inpatient Beds for Wake County**

DFS Health Planning  
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Presented by John Thoma, Chief Executive Officer  
Hospice of Wake County

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Medical Facilities  
PLANNING SECTION

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Good afternoon, my name is John Thoma, and I am the Chief Executive Officer for Hospice of Wake County. For over twenty-nine years, Hospice of Wake County has provided quality and compassionate end-of-life care to residents of Wake County and the surrounding areas.

I am here today to present our petition for an adjusted need determination to include ten additional hospice inpatient beds in Wake County in the 2009 State Medical Facilities Plan.

The Proposed 2009 State Medical Facilities Plan identifies a need for thirty-three hospice inpatient beds in Wake County. Although this need is clearly indicated by the standard methodology, there is no allocation as a result of the relatively low occupancy rate of the existing six hospice beds currently located at an acute care hospital. Hospice of Wake County believes that the occupancy rate of these beds is not reflective of the need for hospice inpatient beds in Wake County.

Hospice of Wake County justifies the proposed adjusted need determination based on this and several other factors. Although these will be discussed in greater detail in our petition, I would like to outline a few of these issues for you, today.

First, residents of Wake County and their physicians recognize the valuable benefits that hospice services provide. As a result, the utilization of hospice services in Wake County has grown significantly. Notably, the days of care provided by hospices in Wake County has increased by 228% since 2004.

Much of this growth can be attributed to the rapidly aging population in Wake County. In fact, Wake County's population aged 65 and older is projected to increase by nearly 33% in the next four years. This growth rate is more than double that of the State, thus driving the increased need for hospice inpatient services.

However, as previously mentioned, there are only six hospice inpatient beds that are currently operational in Wake County, and these are located in Rex Hospital. Although Hospice of Wake County has worked for many years to support the hospice inpatient unit, we believe that solely due to their location within an acute care hospital, the inpatient hospice beds will never be utilized to maximum capacity.

This was a key component in HOWC and Rex's approved CON application from 2007 to relocate the six hospice inpatient beds from Rex Hospital to Hospice of Wake County's approved hospice inpatient facility. However, our facility remains under development

and will not be operational until late 2009. Thus, Rex Hospital still operates the six inpatient hospice beds in its general acute care hospital and will continue to do so until our inpatient facility is completed. Therefore, the standard methodology withholds the allocation of inpatient hospice beds in Wake County because of the occupancy rate of the six inpatient beds at Rex Hospital. It is our firm belief that the current occupancy rate of these beds is not an accurate representation of the hospice inpatient need in Wake County, and should not negatively impact the hospice inpatient bed methodology for Wake County.

Due to their current location within an acute care facility, the hospice inpatient beds at Rex Hospital are not preferred from a patient perspective. There are many reasons for this, including:

- Some hospice patients have opted to forego traditional acute care services and cease aggressive, curative treatments, and hospice beds at Rex Hospital do not represent a physical departure from this environment.

- Family and friends cannot receive the comprehensive, emotional benefits of hospice services.
- Many terminally ill patients are afraid of dying in a hospital.
- Visiting hours for family and friends are frequently restricted.
- Appropriate overnight accommodations are not readily available.

In addition, Wake County's current hospice inpatient bed situation is unique in North Carolina. Nowhere else in the Region are there hospice inpatient beds located within a general acute care hospital. Therefore, the standard need methodology, specifically the 85% occupancy threshold, is not applicable to Wake County, and should be appropriately modified.

Other than Rex Hospital, nursing facilities are currently the only option for residents of Wake County seeking local hospice inpatient services. This solution does not ideally benefit most hospice patients and their families. Nursing facilities are not designed to meet the

needs of hospice patients nor are nursing facility staff typically trained in hospice care.

In the past year, Hospice of Wake County referred 21 patients to a nursing home facility for inpatient care, representing 100 days of service. The number of patients referred to nursing homes within Wake County has been steadily increasing in recent years. This growth is indicative of the pressing need for additional hospice inpatient beds in Wake County.

Should this petition not be granted, the need for hospice inpatient beds in Wake County will continue to be largely unmet. Patients will continue to receive hospice inpatient care in either an acute care facility or in a nursing care facility, neither of which is designed for palliative care. Either option represents a compromise solution for hospice patients and their families.

In conclusion, Hospice of Wake County seeks to further its mission of providing high quality care to hospice patients in Wake County. The

additional ten hospice inpatient beds would enable us to do so, in addition to accommodating the rapidly aging population and increasing demand for hospice services within Wake County.

We feel there is a clear need for additional hospice inpatient beds located in Wake County. We hope you will support us in this effort by approving this petition for an adjusted need determination. Thank you for providing me with the opportunity to discuss this important issue.