



Public Hearing Comments

Surry County Hospice Inpatient Bed Adjusted Need Petition

**Presented by Denise Watson, Executive Director
Mountain Valley Hospice & Palliative Care**

Good afternoon. My name is Denise Watson and I am the Executive Director of Mountain Valley Hospice & Palliative Care. I am here today to speak on behalf of our petition for an adjusted need determination to include three hospice inpatient beds in the 2014 State Medical Facilities Plan. We are speaking today because as a community-based, not-for-profit agency, we consider this issue to be of great importance to residents of our county. Last year we also submitted a petition for this adjusted need determination. Unfortunately, we did not receive approval. However, our facility is still operating at capacity, so we are here before the SHCC again, and hopeful that you will grant us approval for 2014.

Our agency has been providing Hospice services to the terminally ill since 1983. Our mission is to improve the quality of life for individuals with a limited life expectancy, and for their families. Mountain Valley provides hospice services to patients and their

Hospice Utilization

Residents of Surry County and their physicians recognize the valuable benefits of hospice services. As a result, hospice services are well-utilized in Surry County. In fact, Surry County residents utilize hospice services at more than 140% the rate of all North Carolina residents. During FY2012, occupancy at our Woltz Hospice Home averaged a daily census of 12.3 for the 13 inpatient beds. This utilization pattern has continued during the current year-to-date, as we are averaging 12.1 average daily census this year, or 92.9% occupancy. So for nearly four straight years, we have filled our hospice inpatient beds in Surry County.

The SMFP standard methodology projects 2,017 days of care based on using the average length of stay from either the county or the statewide median, whichever is lower. However, in the case of Surry County, the 2012 average length of stay is much higher than the statewide median. Due to this significant difference, the standard methodology projects 2017 Surry County days of care will decrease 10 percent from the actual 2012 use. In fact, our facility's nine-month year-to-date inpatient utilization has been 3,298 days of care. With still three months remaining in FY2013, this total already exceeds the Proposed SMFP's projected Surry County 2017 inpatient days of care by 3%. This is not a realistic projection, as it is inconsistent with the historical utilization in Surry County.

The percentage of county deaths served by hospice is another indicator of utilization of hospice services by county residents. During recent years, the percentage of total Surry County deaths served by hospice has remained consistently higher compared to the Statewide median. Surry County ranks 20th out of 100 North Carolina counties for the percent of deaths served by hospice.

Surry County also has a high cancer incidence rate for the population age 65 and older. Cancer diagnoses account for over 35% of all hospice admissions. The age 65 and older incidence rate of cancer in Surry County is 5% higher than the State average. Given that cancer is the most common diagnosis for hospice patients, the increased utilization of hospice services for cancer patients makes it important to consider the incidence of this disease in evaluating hospice bed need in Surry County.

Community Support

Mountain Valley recognizes the vast and broad community support for hospice inpatient beds in Surry County. We have strong support from local physicians, hospitals, government agencies, community leaders, and local churches to add hospice inpatient beds within the county. Last year when we submitted this petition, it was accompanied by over 250 community letters of support. Surry County residents know the great need we have for increasing local access to inpatient hospice services.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Mountain Valley Hospice seeks an adjusted need determination for three hospice inpatient beds in Surry County. Our hospice inpatient facility is operating at capacity. Local demand for hospice services remains high, and is increasing at a steady rate. The other regional inpatient hospice facilities are very far from patients and their families. Without an adjusted need determination, the need for locally accessible hospice inpatient beds in Surry County will not be fully met. Mountain Valley Hospice and the Surry County community know that an adjusted need determination will improve access, quality, and costs for Surry County residents.