



Public Hearing Comments

Hospice Inpatient Bed Adjusted Need Petition

Presented by Laura Owen, CEO

Good afternoon. My name is Laura Owen and I am the CEO of Hospice of Davidson County. I am here to speak on behalf of our petition for an adjusted need determination to include three hospice inpatient beds for Davidson County in the 2016 State Medical Facilities Plan.

Hospice of Davidson County was built due to the commitment and efforts of a handful of dedicated volunteers. Since 1985, our agency has been providing hospice services to patients and their families in Davidson County. We have a mission to provide excellent care for patients with a life-limiting illness, and support for their families. Specific to this petition, we currently operate 8 hospice inpatient beds and 4 residential beds at our Hinkle Hospice House located in the center of Davidson County.

The Proposed 2016 SMFP indicates no need determination for additional hospice inpatient beds in Davidson County. However, we believe many circumstances exist to justify the inclusion of three hospice inpatient beds for Davidson County in the 2016 SMFP, including the following:

- Our existing hospice inpatient beds are well utilized, with 88% occupancy last year.

- Davidson County's growth rate of hospice admissions is 2 ½ times the statewide average growth rate for hospice admissions.
- The percentage of Davidson County deaths served by hospice providers has steadily increased over the years, and is now higher compared to the overall State percentage.
- Davidson County's 2-year trailing average hospice inpatient utilization rate is 62% higher than the statewide 2-year rate.

Hospice Utilization

Hospice services are well-utilized in Davidson County. Our hospice agency admissions doubled between 2009 and 2014. Our admission growth rate is over 5%, compared to the State average of 2%. Correspondingly, occupancy at our Hospice House has been steadily increasing since we opened the facility in 2010. Unfortunately, last year 57 patients died before they could be admitted to our hospice inpatient facility because we had no GIP beds available.

The percentage of county deaths served by hospice is another indicator of utilization of hospice services by county residents. Davidson County ranks 36th out of 100 North Carolina counties for the percent of deaths served by hospice.

These statistics are clear indications that hospice is an important and highly utilized service for residents of Davidson County.

Davidson County Population

Davidson County has an older population compared to the State. Residents age 65 and older make up nearly 17% of our total county population, and will exceed 18% by 2019.

Davidson County has a high cancer incidence rate for the population age 65 and older, more than 5% higher than the State average. Cancer is the most common diagnosis for our hospice patients, accounting for 33% of our hospice admissions.

Geographic access to hospice inpatient services is particularly important for hospice patients. Family members and friends often visit patients on a daily basis because patients are in the last days of their lives. Travel is disruptive, expensive, and stressful for many families who must travel long distances out of county to visit their loved ones. Other hospice inpatient facilities outside of Davidson County have limited availability as they are operating at or near their bed capacity.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Hospice of Davidson seeks an adjusted need determination for three hospice inpatient beds in Davidson County. We have strong support from local physicians, hospitals, government agencies, community leaders, and local churches to add hospice inpatient beds. Davidson County residents know the great need we have for increasing local access to inpatient hospice services. Without an adjusted need determination, the need for locally accessible hospice inpatient beds in Davidson County will not be fully met.

We hope you will support our effort to better serve Davidson County by approving our petition for an adjusted need determination. Thank you for again providing me with the opportunity to discuss this important community issue.