

POLICY AND PROCEDURE

NUMBER: 8721-024	REVIEWED AND REVISED: 01-02-2024	EFFECTIVE DATE: 01-01-2015	SUPERSEDES NO./DATE: 08-11-2020 8611-065
DISTRIBUTION: ADMINISTRATION, MEDICAL STAFF, NURSING SERVICE ADMINISTRATION			
SUBJECT: Death with Dignity Act – Hospital and Its Providers Will Not Participate		APPROVED BY: <i>Vicki Polchamus RN/CNO</i> CHIEF NURSING OFFICER <i>Rosalinda Kibby</i> <small>Rosalinda Kibby, LJan 3, 2024 05:51 PST</small> ADMINISTRATION	

1. Washington law recognizes certain rights and responsibilities of qualified patients and health care providers under RCW 70.245, the Death with Dignity Act (“Act”). Under Washington law, a health care provider, including Columbia Basin Hospital is not required to assist a qualified patient in ending that patient’s life.
2. Columbia Basin Hospital has chosen to not participate under the Death with Dignity Act. This means that in the performance of their duties, Columbia Basin Hospital physicians, medical providers, employees, independent contractors and volunteers shall not assist a patient in ending the patient’s life under the Act. In addition, no physician or medical provider may participate on the premises of the hospital or in property owned by the hospital.
3. No patient will be denied other medical care or treatment because of the patient’s participation under the Act. The patient will be treated in the same manner as all other Columbia Basin Hospital patients. The appropriate standard of care will be followed.
4. Any patient wishing to receive life-ending medication while a patient at this hospital will be assisted in transfer to another facility of the patient’s choice. The transfer will assure continuity of care.
5. All physicians and medical providers at Columbia Basin Hospital are expected to respond to any patient’s query about life-ending medication with openness and compassion. Columbia Basin Hospital believes our physicians and medical providers have an obligation to openly discuss the patient’s concerns, unmet needs, feelings, and desires about the dying process. Physicians and medical providers should seek to learn the meaning behind the patient’s questions and help the patient understand the range of available options, including but not limited to comfort care, hospice care, and pain control. Ultimately, Columbia Basin Hospital’s goal is to help patients make informed decisions about end-of-life care.

PROCEDURE

1. All patients will be provided with educational materials about end-of-life options. These materials will include a statement that Columbia Basin Hospital does not participate in the Act.
2. If, as a result of learning of Columbia Basin Hospital's decision not to participate in the Act, the patient wishes to have care transferred to another hospital of the patient's choice, Columbia Basin Hospital staff will assist in making arrangements for the transfer. If the patient wishes to remain at Columbia Basin Hospital, staff will discuss what end of life care will be provided consistent with hospital policy.
3. If a patient requests a referral to a physician or medical provider who will fully participate under the Act or expresses the desire to take medication that will result in the patient's death, the provider may choose to provide the patient with a referral, or may instruct the patient that he or she must find a participating physician or medical provider on his or her own. The relevant medical records will be transferred to the physician or medical provider taking over the patient's care. The patient's primary clinical care giver (nurse or social worker) will be responsible for:
 - a. Informing the patient's attending physician or medical provider as soon as possible, and no longer than one working day, that the patient wishes to take life-ending medications.
 - b. Ensuring that the medical record is complete and all required documentation is included. A copy of the Resuscitation Status (DNR) order, copies of advance directives, and POLST form are to be included.
 - c. Communicating with other clinicians involved with the patient to ensure continuity of care.
 - d. Documenting all communication in the patient's medical record.
4. Nothing in this policy prevents a physician or medical provider from making an initial determination that the patient has a terminal disease and informing the patient of the medical prognosis.
5. Nothing in this policy prevents a physician or medical provider from providing information about the "Washington State Death with Dignity Act" to a patient when the patient requests information.
6. Nothing in this policy prohibits a physician or medical provider who is employed by or who is an independent contractor of Columbia Basin Hospital from participating under the Act when not functioning within the scope of his or her capacity as an employee or independent contractor of Columbia Basin Hospital.

SANCTIONS

If a physician or medical provider participates in the Act beyond what is allowed in the policy, Columbia Basin Hospital may impose sanctions on that physician or medical provider. Columbia Basin Hospital shall follow due process procedures provided for in the medical staff bylaws.

Sanctions may include:

- Loss of medical staff privileges;
- Loss of membership;
- Restriction from provider panel;
- Termination of lease or other property contract [the hospital may want to consider updating leases or property contracts to reflect this possibility];
- Termination of contracts

PUBLIC NOTICE

Columbia Basin Hospital will provide public notice of this policy in the following ways: posting the policy or information about the hospital's stance on the Death with Dignity Act on the hospital's web page; informing local media; including information in the hospital's community newsletters; including information in hospital materials regarding advance directives; and including information in patient's rights handbooks.

RESOURCES

Any patient, employee, independent contractor, volunteer, physician, or medical provider may contact the Social Services or Chief Nursing Officer for assistance.

Laws/Regulations:

RCW 70.245: Washington Death with Dignity Act

Washington State Department of Health Regulations Chapter 246-978 WAC

Reference Materials:

The Oregon Death with Dignity Act: A Guidebook for Health Care Professionals