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## DEATH WITH DIGNITY

### POLICY NO-HOS-RE-1-029

### PURPOSE

In accordance with the Washington Death with Dignity Act (RCW 70.245), Harbors recognizes the patient's right to request a prescription for a life-ending dose of medication to end his or her life. The Death with Dignity Act involves the self-administration of a medication in the person's home environment.

Definition as defined in the Washington Death with Dignity Act

1. **Death with Dignity Act** = The Death with Dignity Act allows terminally ill adults, who are seeking to end their life, to request lethal doses of medication from medical and/or osteopathic physician. The terminally ill patients must be a Washington resident who has less than six months to live.
2. **Adult** = means an individual who is 18 years of age or older.
3. **Competent** = means that, in the opinion of a court or in the opinion of the patient's attending physician or consulting physician, psychiatrist, or psychologist, a patient has the ability to make and communicate an informed decision to health care providers, including communication through persons familiar with the patient's manner of communicating, if those persons are available.
4. **Self-Administer** = means a qualified patient's act of ingesting medication to end his or her life in a humane and dignified manner.
5. **Qualified Patient** = means a competent adult who is a resident of Washington state and has satisfied the requirements under Washington Death with Dignity Act in order to obtain a prescription for medication that the qualified patient may self-administer to end his or her life in a humane and dignified manner.
6. **Terminal Disease** = means an incurable and irreversible disease that has been medically confirmed and will within reasonable medical judgment produce death within six months.
7. **WDD medication** = specific medication that is prescribed under the WA Death with Dignity Act for the purpose of ending the terminally ill patient's life.

This policy is designed to provide guidelines for staff caring for a patient who expresses interest in proceeding with The Washington Death with Dignity (WDD) Act, RCW 70.245.

Giving patients general information about their available options under WDD law is to be distinguished from activities directly related to the delivery, ingestion, or direct facilitation of life-ending activities under the act.

It is the policy of Harbors Home Health & Hospice that it respects the rights of patients to determine whether they wish to participate in actions defined in this policy with regard to

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the Death with Dignity Act. However, representatives of Harbors Home Health & Hospice will not participate in the act.

## **PROCEDURE**

1. Hospice will continue to provide care and support to patients who qualify for Hospice services regardless of their stated interest or intent of pursuing WDD.
2. Hospice Staff will not provide, deliver, or assist with medications intended for WDD.
3. Hospice staff may not be present in the home when a patient ingests WDD medication.
4. The Hospice RN/MSW may provide information to the patient and family about WDD. This may include information from End of Life Washington.
5. Should a staff member arrive at the home of a patient in the course of a regularly scheduled visit and finds one of the two scenarios, (1) the patient has taken the medication but is not deceased, or (2) the patient has taken the medication and has deceased; the staff member will continue to provide appropriate quality hospice care.
6. If a staff member requests not to work with a patient pursuing WDD, another staff will be assigned to the patient to provide hospice care. If no other staff member is available to provide the needed care, the staff member currently caring for the patient will provide the necessary care until alternative staffing can be arranged.
7. A staff member's beliefs and choice as it relates to the WDD or choosing not to participate in a patient's care based on this belief system will be respected and will not be referenced to performance.
8. Harbors will not provide any funds/resources related to the facilitation of WDD or paying for any medication that will be used to end a patient life in relation to the WA Death with Dignity Act.

### **REVISION HISTORY**

CREATED: APRIL 2019

REVISED: JUNE 2022

REVISED AUGUST 2023



Harbors Home Health & Hospice dedicates its time and attention to delivering social, spiritual, and clinical support to our patients and their loved ones, as they navigate their individual journeys. Harbors respects the autonomy and everyone's right to choose their own path. However, Harbors Home Health & Hospice neither facilitates, nor participates in "Death with Dignity". Regardless of the decision to participate in "Death with Dignity" or not, Harbors will remain committed to delivering hospice care to you or your loved one no matter the decision made. "Death with Dignity" does not end the need for hospice services for the patient and their loved ones.

Ryan Larsen, CEO