

**Seven Reasons Why It's  
Important to Talk to An  
Attorney Who Understands  
the Needs of Hospice  
Patients and Their Families**



**Compliments of:**



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Hospice is an approach to medical care for patients nearing the end of their life. The goal is to enhance the quality of life for patients who have a terminal illness. With that in mind, hospice focuses on pain management and symptom relief while addressing the patient's emotional, social and spiritual needs—as well as the needs of the family members. Hospice lets patients and their families share their end-of-life experience with dignity, and in most cases, in the comfort of their own homes.

There are often legal issues which arise at this time. There may be decisions to make on how to handle things ranging from healthcare decision making to financial management to how your property should pass at your death. Fredrick P. Niemann, Esq., managing partner of Hanlon Niemann, a central New Jersey law firm that offers a well-respected elder law practice to clients throughout New Jersey on such issues as Medicaid and Medicare qualification, nursing home rights, asset protection, guardianships, trusts, wills and all issues affecting an aging population, compiled a list of some of the reasons why it's important to deal with an attorney skilled in helping families during this difficult time.

**1. It's important to deal with an attorney who concentrates his or her practice on these types of issues.** Helping families through this difficult time takes a special

set of skills. Not only is it important to understand the technical part of the law, but it's also critical to have an attorney who understands the emotional aspects. You want someone you will be comfortable with, and someone who has provided the services to countless families going through the same issues you and your family face now.

**2. The attorney's staff must also be well-trained.** Hospice caseworkers are a special group of people. Once you've dealt with them, you quickly find that to be true. And while it's important to deal with an attorney who is sensitive and understands the issues you're facing...it's also crucial to deal with an attorney whose practice is geared toward helping you and your loved ones. Plus it's important that the attorney's staff also understands all of the challenges you are facing since you may be dealing with the support staff often.

**3. You want an attorney who understands the government programs that are available to you.** In this day and age, it's difficult for any professional to know all there is to know about any given topic. That's especially true when it comes to issues of government benefits like Medicare and Medicaid. It's important that you deal with an attorney who works frequently in this area and who is used to dealing with the State. You need an attorney who knows how to help you and your family.

**4. It's important to deal with an attorney who knows how to help you to protect your life's savings.** No matter the size of your estate, you worked hard to earn it. It's important to you and it's important to your family that you pass along as much of it as possible. When selecting an attorney, be sure that he or she is knowledgeable on how to help you arrange things so that you receive the care you need and so that your assets will be preserved for your family to the greatest extent allowed by the law.

**5. How to avoid probate.** For many hospice patients, one of their most important concerns is that they want their estate to pass to their loved ones without going through probate. There are many ways to accomplish this, ranging from simple beneficiary designations to gifting strategies to trust planning and so on. It is important that you deal with an attorney who understands the various ways that property passes...and who can show you how to arrange your estate to avoid probate where that is appropriate.

**6. It is important to work with an attorney who knows the value of a dollar.** One of the biggest gripes people have in dealing with legal professionals is that they feel like they are "on the clock" and will be charged extra for every question they ask or every time they pick up the phone. Where possible, you should consider an attorney who works on a flat fee basis. Ideally, you want someone who will tell you, when possible, what will be involved and what the cost

will be. That way you can be a smart consumer and get the most for your dollar, while making sure that things are handled in the most appropriate manner.

**7. Select an attorney who makes house calls.** Dealing with clients on hospice is unlike most other types of legal practice. Usually the family has to go to the attorney's office for a consultation. Not only can this be stressful, but it also takes a lot of time. An attorney who deals with hospice, on the other hand, will make house calls when needed. This makes things easier on the family, especially in the late stages, since often times hospice patients have great difficulty getting around.

All of these are reasons why it is important to deal with someone who practices in this important area of the law and who has a sensitivity to the needs of hospice patients and their families.

If you or a loved one is on hospice, the ability to make financial and healthcare decisions may decrease over time. Making informed decisions about personal, business and healthcare issues may become more difficult or even impossible.

Fortunately, proper planning will assure that things are handled according to your wishes and that you've taken the best steps possible to protect your loved ones and to protect your family.

Call now to discuss your concerns with an attorney who understands hospice and the special challenges a life threatening illness can present.

If you have any questions about the contents of this article, please call Fredrick P. Niemann personally at 732-863-9900 or e-mail him at [fniemann@hnlawfirm.com](mailto:fniemann@hnlawfirm.com).

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