June 24, 2020

Dear Hospice Colleagues-

I am thrilled that many of you attended one or both of our previous Hospice Group zoom calls where we began talking about challenges and best practices in these times of the pandemic. I am grateful to be working with you. The purpose of our Hospice Group is twofold: (1) to be the voice for hospice regarding crisis planning for the state’s CHER committee (Colorado Healthcare Ethics Resource) for the current pandemic as well as for future crises, and (2) to share, learn from and support each other regarding the challenges posed by COVID-19.

Here is a little information about how our Hospice Group came into being. Hospice Analytics had recently been approached about the need for a platform for Colorado hospices to discuss challenges, successes, and ideas surrounding COVID-19 challenges. We spoke with colleagues at several related organizations (HHAC, CIVHC, and CDPHE) who agreed that there was indeed a need. This endeavor seemed to fit in nicely with the work of Dr. Jean Abbott and CHER’s Crisis Standards of Care work (for hospices), so we created our Hospice Group.

Our Hospice Group has already identified the need for statewide data collection surrounding COVID-19 issues. You will be receiving your first hospice survey soon. It will be emailed to you weekly. We ask that you respond to the survey weekly so that CDPHE will know the current COVID-hospice landscape.  This will help in planning for a second viral wave or for any future crisis that may impact our ability to care for patients.

This is YOUR Hospice Group; your platform to share ideas and best practices in caring for hospice patients during these challenging times of the COVID-19 pandemic. But the work of the group will be most meaningful if a hospice professional, someone who sees the issues first-hand, steps into the role of leading and facilitating the hospice discussions as we move forward. Hospice Analytics got the ball rolling with the intent of having hospice leaders lead the group forward. Perhaps you would like the Home Care & Hospice Association of Colorado (HHAC) or others to get involved. It is up to you to decide if and how this group will move forward and be most helpful to you.

Dr. Jean Abbott will continue to attend the hospice calls and share your concerns through CHER, the Governor’s Expert Emergency Epidemic Response Committee (GEEERC), and with the Governor himself. Our next call on July 9 (**July 2 call postponed**) will focus on discussions surrounding hospice care in the facilities including challenges in utilizing technology with seniors, isolation of patients and families, and basic access to our patients. Beyond that, what topics do you want to address? How can future zoom discussions be most helpful to you?

**I ask that you respond to me regarding two action items below**. Your responses will help in planning future calls to address your needs.

1. **Name the top 3 issues/concerns your organization is experiencing in regard to caring for hospice patients in these times of COVID-19.** Examples might include: utilizing volunteers safely, bereavement care and funeral planning, telehealth, moral distress re: providing great care when personal contact must be limited, supporting staff in nursing homes, shortages of staff/DME/oxygen/meds/supplies/other, reduction in ADC/revenue along with increased costs for PPE, coroner issues, etc.
2. **Would you be that hospice professional who is willing to facilitate/lead the Hospice Group discussions (zoom calls)?** I envision one main person who will facilitate sharing, delegate topics of future discussion, plan future calls and speakers, etc. I’d be happy to chat by phone about this role with you if you’d like.

Most importantly, THANK YOU for your care, skill and commitment to caring for vulnerable and suffering Coloradans. They need you more than ever.

With great respect,

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