



Purpose

To provide guidance to Skagit Regional Health (SRH) providers, staff, patients, families and the community it serves regarding Skagit Regional Health's participation in the "Washington State Death with Dignity Act" (Act).

Policy

With certain limitations, Skagit Regional Health allows its providers to participate in the "Washington State Death with Dignity Act" if they so choose. SRH does not mandate that any provider participate in the "Washington State Death with Dignity Act", nor does it encourage any provider to do so. Only those providers who are willing and desire to participate should do so. SRH believes providers have an obligation to respond to and openly discuss any patient's query about life-ending medication and assist patients in making informed decisions about end-of-life care.

Skagit Regional Health providers may choose to:

1. Request a consult or make a referral to the Skagit Regional Health Palliative Care Team;
2. Make a referral to Hospice care through Skagit Regional Health's affiliation with Hospice of the Northwest;
3. Prescribe life-ending medication;
4. Provide counseling in connection with the provision of life-ending medication; and/or
5. Perform other duties as provided for in the Act.

Limitations on Participation

1. Skagit Regional Health pharmacy staff shall not fill a prescription for life-ending medication.
2. Patient shall not self administer life-ending medications at Skagit Regional Health.

Sanctions

If a provider participates in the Act beyond what is allowed in this policy, a referral will be made to the Medical Staff Services Office for investigation and review which will follow due process procedures provided for in the Medical Staff Bylaws.

Procedure

1. Patients who request information will be provided with educational materials about end-of-life options.
2. These materials will include a statement about SRH's position with regard to participation in the Act.
3. Any inpatient wishing to receive life-ending medication while still an inpatient:
 - a. With the patient's authorization, will be assisted in transfer to another facility of the patient's choice; and
 - b. The transfer will assure continuity of care.
4. It is the provider's responsibility to ensure the correct procedures are followed and the correct documentation is completed in accordance with the Act and SRH policy.
5. SRH may review records to the extent necessary to ensure:
 - a. All the safeguards of the law have been followed;
 - b. The required documentation is completed; and
 - c. The documentation is submitted to the Department of Health.

Medical Providers and Staff Responsibilities

1. All providers and staff at SRH are expected to respond to any patient's query about life-ending medication with openness and compassion.
2. Providers will:
 - a. Openly discuss the patient's concerns, unmet needs, feelings, and desires about the dying process;
 - b. Seek to learn the meaning behind the patient's questions; and
 - c. Help the patient understand the range of available options, including but not limited to:
 - i. Palliative and comfort care;
 - ii. Hospice care; and

- iii. Assistance with pain control.
3. Providers are encouraged to refer appropriate patients to Hospice Care.
4. Providers will help patients make informed decisions about end-of-life care.
5. Providers may refer patients seeking life-ending medication to a state licensed psychiatrist or psychologist to perform a mental health evaluation prior to prescribing the medication.

Documentation

1. Providers will complete any checklist, hospital form or record designed to document the provider and patient's participation.
2. Providers will complete the documentation required for reporting to the Department of Health.
3. Providers will document in the medical record any discussion, counseling or consultation provided to patients regarding the "Washington State Death with Dignity Act".

References

Laws/Regulations: Initiative 1000/Washington Death with Dignity Act; Washington State Department of Health Regulations Chapter WAC 246-978.

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

Per Washington State Department of Health (DOH) regulations this policy is required to be uploaded to the Washington State DOH website and posted to Skagit Regional Health's website.

References

Reference Type	Title	Notes
Documents referenced by this document		
Referenced Documents	WAC 246-978	
Referenced Documents	WAC 246-978	
Documents which reference this document		
Referenced Documents	Mandatory Policy Website Posting	
Signed/Approved By	(11/22/2023 08:17 AM PST) Committee SRH, SVH, CVH Policy & Procedure	
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