

Quality Matters

With authenticity as its ethos, Hospice of Orange & Sullivan Counties redefines the measures of quality end-of-life care.

The end of life brings emotional, spiritual, and physical needs. For those with a terminal diagnosis, hospice care provides compassionate support through which life can be lived fully and freely.

“People are completely unprepared for the type of empathy and true caregiving that transpires once they come on hospice,” says Sandra Cassese, President and COO of Hospice of Orange & Sullivan Counties. “We try to add more life to your days.”

A pillar of the community for more than 30 years, Hospice of Orange & Sullivan Counties has earned The Joint Commission’s Gold Seal of Approval® and has been named a TOP 10 Hospice in New York State. But its measures of quality care go far beyond the bureaucratic requirements.

“People may think quality is about regulations, graphs, and data,” says Melissa Hansen, Director of Quality. “But each one of those rules and metrics is about doing the right thing for our patients and their loved ones.”

Flipping the Script

When patients are first referred to hospice care, they typically express shock at the reality of their illness. That’s when Hospice of Orange & Sullivan Counties’ interdisciplinary team illustrates its tenets of transparency and consistency, unravelling often misconceived notions of hospice care’s intent.

“Families and caregivers may feel like they’re giving up, but we’ve demonstrated time and again that when patients come on hospice, it improves their quality of life and often extends their prognosis,” says Cassese.

Care providers, social workers, and spiritual counselors are available to visit 24/7, 365 days a year, traveling to patients’ homes when they need assistance or a listening ear. Vital to providing a high-touch level of service, Hansen notes, is educating and training family members and caregivers on how they can help their loved one at home.

“We focus a lot on the family member’s perception of care,” she says. “We may think we’re providing a certain level of care, but if it doesn’t reach the family or loved one the way they need it, what good is it?”

Central to quality care is alleviating patients’ pain and recognizing the symptoms of last days. Hospice of Orange & Sullivan Counties works diligently to keep nurses and care teams informed of the myriad ways patients may express their final moments. “During the last days, you need additional visits to provide medical treatment and emotional support,” says Hansen. “However, it’s critical for our team to understand that it’s not just about getting



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those additional visits in. It’s about being there when the patient and their loved ones need them the most.”

From recognizing the singularity of patients’ values to employing people passionate about the morality behind their work, every effort points back to Hospice of Orange & Sullivan Counties’ emphasis on the humanity of hospice care.

“You can’t undo the experience of death,” says Cassese. “We have an obligation to make sure patients feel like their life had meaning and that the people who surround them have an experience they’ll look back on and say, ‘This is the way it was supposed to be.’”

