



## **Letter of Commitment**

### **Our Commitment to Care during the COVID-19 Pandemic**

We, the undersigned members of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO), commit to caring for patients and families in need as we face the worst public health crisis in over a century.

Suffering patients impacted by the coronavirus (COVID-19) rely on the interdisciplinary, person-centered care that the community-based hospice and palliative community provides. The hospice philosophy of care focuses on caring for the whole person by addressing physical, emotional, and spiritual needs, and is provided by an interdisciplinary team comprised of physicians, nurses, social workers, home health aides, chaplains, bereavement professionals, volunteers, and allied therapists. As more hospitals reach maximum capacity, patients continue to be discharged back into the community and the demand for symptom management and emotional and spiritual support grows. We will continue to treat patients ensuring that patients do not die alone, and in some cases saving lives, and we are prepared for the thousands more Americans who will seek care in hospice inpatient units and in their homes as many states experience their peaks in the coming weeks as projected by the Centers for Disease Control.<sup>1</sup>

As COVID-19 claims the lives of Americans leaving family members and loved ones to struggle with the often sudden and traumatic loss, it should be remembered that hospice providers often serve as important community bereavement resource centers. Many hospices open their bereavement support services to those in the community beyond the customary family caregivers of the patients they have served. Providers have a history of offering support to communities following natural disasters, mass casualty events, other public health tragedies. Hospice bereavement professionals are called upon to help individuals and communities cope with the loss and grief that is now a part of our nation's experience from the COVID-19 pandemic.

With our commitment to serve these patients impacted by COVID-19 comes our commitment to keep our patients, family caregivers, and staff members safe. Like the rest of the health care system coping with the COVID-19 pandemic, our provider community is facing several challenges including a dire shortage of resources, like personal protective equipment, testing supplies, and staffing. But, in the face of this challenge, we continue to care for patients by finding creative solutions.

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<sup>1</sup> Sun, Lena H. "CDC director warns second wave of coronavirus is likely to be even more devastating." [WashingtonPost.com](https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/cdc-director-warns-second-wave-of-coronavirus-is-likely-to-be-even-more-devastating/2020/04/21/), 21 April 2020.

It is unknown how many lives will be impacted by COVID-19 or how long the virus will continue to cause major disruptions around the world. The hospice and palliative care community has faced similar unknowns in the past with the HIV/AIDS epidemic. We did not shy away – we cared for the patients who needed us at that time, and we did so with honor and respect.

In the face of uncertainty and the many unknowns, we stand ready to serve and deliver the high-quality person-centered care our patients and families receive every day, to make the safety of our team members a priority, and to remember the sanctity of every individual we care for during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

Respectfully,

