



How to Determine Home Care Needs and Where to Go for **ASSISTANCE**

BY JANET BOLLIG, MSSW

For many people, knowing when a loved one needs additional care and support can be difficult. The first step is identifying any underlying issues that might indicate the need for more care. Some things to look for include:

- Changes in medical condition
- An acute, chronic, or terminal condition
- Functional or cognitive decline
- Frequent visits to the emergency room, urgent care, or frequent hospitalizations
- Concerns about home safety or falls
- Changes in mobility
- Isolation
- Depression or anxiety
- Lack of support
- Financial concerns
- Changes in appetite or weight loss or gain
- Assistance with daily activities (chores, shopping, cooking, bathing, etc.)

For a more extensive checklist, please visit HomeHealthUnited.org/checklist. Once you have identified a need, the next step is to determine the level of care needed.

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Nonmedical vs. Skilled Services

Nonmedical home care provides assistance with general personal care, like dressing, grooming, eating, and other activities of daily living. This type of care is usually not covered by Medicare or private insurance; however, it may be covered under certain types of long-term care insurance.

Nonmedical care can benefit people whose condition does not qualify them for skilled services but who may have a chronic illness, disease, or injury which requires increased day-to-day support due to physical or cognitive needs, or medication changes.

Skilled services provide patients with medical care in the home. Skilled care is provided by a licensed home health agency and must be prescribed by a physician. Most skilled services are covered by Medicare.

Types of Skilled Services

Skilled home healthcare helps patients remain at home and can include nursing, physical, occupational, and other therapies as well as medical social work support.

Palliative care is a form of home healthcare for patients facing chronic or quality-of-life-limiting illnesses and is focused on relieving symptoms, pain, and stress. Palliative care can be provided alongside curative treatments and during any stage of an illness.

Hospice is for patients with a limited life expectancy who are no longer receiving curative treatments. Care is focused on managing symptoms

and controlling pain, as well as supporting patients and their families through the end of life.

Navigating the maze of care options available can be stressful for both caregivers and patients. While many may know they need additional help, they may not know where to find it. Start by talking with your loved one's physician, call your local Aging and Disability Resource Center, or contact area home health agencies for guidance and support.

Janet Bollig, MSSW, is a Medical Social Worker with Home Health United and has been helping patients and families navigate their healthcare journeys for over 25 years. Home Health United is a nonprofit organization providing a variety of services, including home health, hospice, palliative care, medical equipment, personal emergency response systems, infusion services, Meals On Wheels, and home safety assessments. For more information or to request an informational visit, call (800) 924-2273 or visit HomeHealthUnited.org.



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