

Hospice Conversation Checklist for Home Health Nurses

(Free Resource from "The Home Health Nurse's Guide to Hospice" by Arielle Tamez, RN BSN)

Purpose:

To help home health nurses confidently recognize when to introduce hospice, have compassionate discussions with patients and families, and document those conversations clearly.

1. Recognize the Right Time

- Multiple hospitalizations or ER visits in the last 6 months
- Progressive decline in function, appetite, or strength
- Increased pain, shortness of breath, or fatigue
- Patient or family expressing, "I don't want to go back to the hospital."

2. Prepare Before the Visit

- Review recent vitals, weight trends, and medication changes
- Coordinate with case manager or physician to confirm appropriateness
- Choose a quiet, private space for discussion

3. Start the Conversation

Open with empathy and observation:

"I've noticed you've been getting more tired, and the hospital stays are taking a toll. Have you thought about what's most important to you right now?"

Avoid clinical jargon. Focus on comfort, goals, and quality of life.

4. Explain Hospice in Plain Language

- Hospice is care focused on comfort, not giving up treatment
- Services include nurses, aides, social workers, and chaplains
- Medications, equipment, and supplies are covered 100% by Medicare/Medicaid
- Support is available 24/7 for both patients and families

5. Address Common Family Fears

- "Hospice means you're dying." → "Hospice helps people live comfortably for as long as possible."
- "The nurse won't come anymore." → "Your hospice nurse visits regularly and is available day or night."

- "We'll lose control." → "You stay in charge of your care and decisions."

6. Documentation Tips

- Document who was present, what was discussed, and patient/family response
- Note education provided about hospice philosophy and services
- Record any referrals or follow-up plans

Example: "Discussed hospice eligibility and services with patient and daughter. Family verbalized understanding and will consider referral."

Tip for Nurses:

Your calm presence and clear explanations can turn fear into relief. Take your time and meet families where they are emotionally.

Want More Support?

Get the complete guide with real-world scripts, teaching phrases, and documentation templates in "The Home Health Nurse's Guide to Hospice: How to Have the Conversation and What Patients and Families Should Expect During the Transition to Home Hospice Care."

Get the Complete Guide on Amazon →