

# Elder Law Matters

By William L. Siebers, Attorney  
*SiebersElderLaw.com*



## Hey Dad . . . Was Mom Ever on Hospice? Hospice — an Under-used Benefit

Mom's been gone 30 years. When I was a senior in high school, she was diagnosed with thyroid cancer. While I did not appreciate it at the time, we went through typical emotional phases after getting the bad news: shock; fear; "we'll *pray* our way out of it"; denial, "we'll *fight* this cancer and win"; etc.



Becky Siebers  
 11/1/32 – 11/1/90

After chemo, radiation, and multiple trips back and forth to the Houston Cancer Centers, the **battle was lost**. Mom lived out her final days here in Quincy. Even after the curative treatments were called off; despite the pain, Mom always had a smile for me when I came to her hospital room.

I would go to see Mom at the hospital between my last class of the day at QU and the start of soccer practice. It was difficult for her to speak, so we just held hands and I did the talking. Near the end, she slept most of the time. On my afternoon visits, I did not

disturb her and kept telling myself that she *knew* I was there and, thus, there was no need to disrupt her slumber. God called her home on her birthday - All Saints Day - November 1. Hardly a coincidence for a lady that raised 5 boys and kept Dad in line for all those years. She is a Saint in my book!

It wasn't until many years after she died when I thought to ask my Dad, was Mom ever on hospice? I work with many clients and their loved ones facing end-of-life decisions. Hospice is a wonderful benefit for those with a terminal illness. But, unfortunately, many clients and families that are eligible do not utilize this resource.

### What Is Hospice?

Hospice is **not** a place; rather, it is an approach to medical care for patients nearing the end of life. It is "comfort care" rather than "curative care". The goal is to enhance the quality of life for patients with a terminal illness. Hospice focuses on

pain management and symptom relief, while addressing the patient's emotional, social and spiritual needs—as well as those of family members. Hospice lets patients and families share the end-of-life experience with dignity and, in many cases, in the comfort of their own homes.

### What Steps Should Your Family Take?

There are many legal issues which can arise at the hospice phase of life's journey. Planning for someone with a life-threatening illness can be complicated. There are decisions to make about health care matters, financial management during life, paying for necessary care, and how property should pass upon death. It is not only important to deal with medical professionals who can guide you, but also with an attorney who practices in and understands this area of the law and who has a sensitivity to the needs of hospice patients and their families. With proper planning, you will ensure that matters are handled according to your wishes and that you've taken the best steps possible to protect your loved ones. There is a peacefulness that comes over hospice patients and their families when they stop reacting to the situation and instead put a positive action plan in place that allows them to preserve their dignity and legacy.

Dad didn't recall Mom ever officially being on hospice. Looking back on it, I suppose the reason was because it seemed like "giving up" but now, as an advocate and elder care attorney, I see it differently. I have heard this saying about hospice: "**Choosing hospice is NOT giving up. It IS choosing to add life to days rather than days to life.**"

I have worked with many clients on hospice. The families consistently tell me . . . "We wished we had known about Hospice sooner! They have been such a Godsend to us."

The compassionate care and counsel provided by a Hospice Team is a relief to patients and their loved ones. Unfortunately, many families that need their services wait too long to seek the help they can offer. For more information, see <https://www.blessinghealth.org/hospice>.

