



## HOSPITAL POLICY AND PROCEDURE

**Title:** The Washington State Death with Dignity Act

**Number:** A722

**Effective Date:** 08/23/10

**Revised Date:**

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### PURPOSE

The Board of Directors of Grays Harbor Community Hospital, acting on the recommendation of the Medical Staff, resolved to allow participation in the Washington State Death with Dignity Act (referred to as “the Act”) (RCW 70.725) on February 25, 2009. This policy describes and mandates the implementation of the Act at Grays Harbor Community Hospital. Our goal is to assist patients to make informed end-of-life care decisions.

### POLICY

Grounded in the hospital’s core values of Reverence and Compassion, the hospital recognizes the array of emotional, spiritual, psychological and social reactions that patients and families face when confronted with end-of-life decisions and care planning.

Grays Harbor Community Hospital allows providers to participate in the “Washington State Death with Dignity Act.” if they so choose. This means that providers at Grays Harbor Community Hospital may:

- Perform the duties of an attending physician;
- Perform the duties of a consulting physician;
- Prescribe life-ending medication;
- Fill a prescription for life-ending medication;
- Provide counseling in connection with the provision of life-ending medication; and/or
- Perform other duties as provided for and described in the Act

### PROCEDURE

When a Grays Harbor Community Hospital provider participates in any action defined by the Act with a “qualified patient” within this hospital, that provider must within an hour of the action notify the COO or the on-call administrator of the fact.

It is the provider’s responsibility to ensure that the correct procedures are followed and that the correct documentation is completed in accordance with the Act and this policy. The steps included in (attachment 1) “The Washington Death with Dignity Checklist” prepared by the Washington State Hospital Association shall be carefully followed and documented.

Executive administrators of the hospital may review medical records of qualified patients to the extent necessary to ensure all the safeguards of the Act have been followed and that the required documentation has been completed and submitted to the Washington State Department of Health.

Grays Harbor Community Hospital does not mandate that any provider participate in the Act, nor encourage any provider to do so.

Providers and hospital staff are expected to respond to any patient’s questions about life-ending medication with openness and compassion. The Washington State Hospital Association informational brochure is available as a resource to provide to patients and family members (attachment 2). The Palliative Care

Consult Team is also available as a referral resource for providers. Chaplaincy and Social Services are available for staff member referrals. Both resources can provide supportive care that exceeds our obligation to openly discuss the patient's concerns, unmet needs, feelings and desires about dying and to explore the meaning behind the patient's questions and help discover options which may not have been considered.

Attending physician shall encourage any qualified patient to complete a POLST form and ensure it is placed in the medical record. Attending physician shall encourage and refer a qualified patient to a Hospice program in order to increase the chance that things will go smoothly at the time of death.

GHCH Pharmacy formulary does not include the medications customarily prescribed for this purpose and therefore providers will need to seek an outside source to assist a qualified patient in obtaining the recommended medications.

**Reviewing Bodies:**

Ethics Committee Task Team on I-1000

**Reference Materials:**

RCW 70.725, Washington State Death with Dignity Act  
Washington State Department of Health rules 246-978WAC  
Washington State Hospital Association I-1000 resources  
Oregon State Death with Dignity Act Guidelines  
Board of Directors Resolution, February 25, 2009  
Medical Executive Committee minutes of April 14, 2009

**Attachments:**

GHCH Death with Dignity Checklist  
Washington State Hospital Association Informational Brochure  
Attending Physician's Compliance Form  
Consulting Physician's Compliance Form  
Psychiatric Consultant's Compliance Form  
Attending Physician's after Death Report Form  
Patient's Written Request Form

**Author of Policy:**

(2/21/11 - original signature on file in Admin)  
Ethics Chair

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Authenticated By:**

(2/21/11 - original signature on file in Admin)  
President/CEO

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date