



Compassion Quarterly

Connecting Community Through Care

EXPANDING SUPPORT FOR PATIENTS WITH SERIOUS ILLNESS

Introducing Home Health Plus

Home Health & Hospice of Dickinson County Launches Home Health Plus to Expand Support for Patients with Serious Illness

Home Health & Hospice of Dickinson County is proud to introduce Home Health Plus, a supportive-care-focused enhancement to its existing home health services. While not a new service line, Home Health Plus strengthens and expands the care already provided, ensuring patients with chronic or serious illnesses receive an additional layer of guidance, symptom support, and care coordination.

Over the years, the landscape of health care has shifted significantly, especially in rural communities like Dickinson County. Increasing insurance restrictions, regulatory pressures, and shorter hospital stays have created a growing gap in services for patients who are not acutely ill but still require ongoing skilled oversight and support. This gap has become especially visible in rural areas, where access to specialty services is limited and patients are often discharged home sooner than ever before. Home Health Plus was redesigned specifically to bridge this gap, helping patients remain on services longer, manage chronic conditions more effectively, and navigate the health care system with greater ease.

This enhancement reflects a long tradition in health care of identifying unmet needs and creating solutions to better support patients. When Dame Cicely Saunders founded the first modern hospice model in London in the 1960s, it began not as a funded initiative but as a visionary idea rooted in compassion and necessity (Saunders, 1967). Her work transformed the way the world cares for people with serious illness and laid the foundation for the hospice and palliative care principles used today. In that same spirit, Home Health Plus was developed to address the growing needs of patients in our rural community and ensure they receive the support they deserve, right here in Dickinson County.

Home Health Plus integrates a supportive-care approach, offering specialized assistance that addresses symptom management, communication needs, and whole-person support. While grounded in principles commonly used in palliative care, the program is intentionally designed to be accessible and easy to understand for patients, families, and non-clinical partners.

Through the agency's affiliation with Memorial Health System, Home Health Plus strengthens collaboration between home-based care teams, hospital providers, and community resources. This alignment ensures smoother transitions, improved communication, and more efficient access to services across the continuum of care.

"Home Health Plus allows us to meet patients where they are and provide the extra support they need to stay safely at home," said Danielle Gantner, Director. "It enhances the care experience, reduces unnecessary hospitalizations, and empowers patients and families to feel more confident managing their health. Because of the support provided to our agency through Memorial Health System and Salina Regional Health Center, and through our continued affiliation, we are able to make this level of care possible for the patients and families we serve." Home Health Plus is now available to qualifying patients, with continued expansion planned over the coming year.



For more information about Home Health Plus or referral options, please contact: Danielle Gantner at 785-263-6630 or dgantner@mhsks.org



At the Office

MHS EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH

Kesa Riffel, Office Coordinator, was recently recognized as Employee of the Month for Memorial Health System! This award, selected by the Employee of Choice committee, honors individuals nominated by their peers and managers for outstanding contributions.

This is Kesa's second time receiving this honor in her four years with MHS and Home Health and Hospice. She has become an integral leader in our department, keeping morale high with special events, ensuring the front office runs smoothly, and always finding a moment to put a smile on everyone's face.

Congratulations, Kesa! We are grateful for your dedication, positivity, and the vital role you play on our team.

Dickinson County CARES

DICKINSON COUNTY COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Dickinson County has a wealth of resources available to support individuals and families. From housing and transportation to senior services, food programs, and education, there is so much in our community ready to help those who need it.

Transportation:

Need a ride to medical appointments within Abilene? City transportation, provided through OCCK and funded courtesy of the Memorial Health Foundation, offers free rides to any medical appointment in town. Just call at least 48 hours in advance to schedule your trip.

Meals on Wheels:

Within city limits, meals are delivered by wonderful local volunteers. Meals are delicious, nutritious, and can be tailored to dietary needs. For more information call Home Health and Hospice of Dickinson County 785-263-6630.

Sharing Shelves:

Abilene is also home to Sharing Shelves, a free or donation-based store offering clothing and essential items to anyone in need.

You can learn more about these services and many others on the CARES Coalition of Dickinson County website:

www.caresresources.org



Photo of the Year Cabinetgate 2025



Team work really does make the dream work. During an innocent lunch break, the cabinet in the office's kitchenette fell off the wall. The whole team came to help hold it up and clean up the broken cups and plates that had fallen out when the initial fall happened. No staffers were injured and our amazing maintenance team secured it firmly to the wall

Quotes of 2025

"I've learned to appreciate the small every day moments. Being present in the moment, and mostly focusing on the positive. What was my biggest fear, taking care of a child on hospice, was the most rewarding and his family taught me so much."-Shannon Walters

"Not all days are good days, but they are all a gift." -Kylie Engle

"You have to have humanity beyond the illness. Our patients are more than their diagnosis and information on a chart."-Cece Murphy

"The value of listening. The most important thing I can offer isn't a treatment or an answer, but to listen to someone's story."-Ashley Burlson

"The most important things in life aren't things."-Kristen Hajek

"I have learned that everyone needs to be treated as though they are the most important person to you during that visit. You may be their only interaction that day, and they need to be better off after your visit than they were before."-Leslie Welsh

"Time with family is the most valuable thing you'll ever have."-Carson Carney

Oxygen Masks and Caregiving: Putting Yourself First

We all know the cliché: in an airplane emergency, you must put on your own oxygen mask before helping anyone else. Caregiving works the same way. You must care for yourself before you can effectively care for someone else.

Here are 10 practical tips to help you prioritize your well-being while juggling the needs of a loved one:

1. Take regular breaks.

It's okay to step away. Let a friend, family member, volunteer, or respite worker sit with your loved one while you shop, have lunch, or simply catch your breath.

2. Establish a support network.

Friends, family, church members, neighbors, and your loved one's physicians are all part of your team. Lean on them.

3. Practice mindfulness and meditation.

Even five minutes of slow breathing or quiet reflection can make a big difference in staying calm throughout the day.

4. Maintain a healthy diet.

And no, three cups of coffee and a Pop-Tart don't count. Nourishing foods help keep your body and mind going.

5. Engage in regular physical activity.

A walk, a quick gym session, or even dancing in the kitchen can release endorphins and improve your mood.

6. Get enough sleep.

Easier said than done, but essential. If you're nodding off while tying a shoe, it's a sign your tank is too empty to keep going.

7. Pursue hobbies and interests.

Read a book. Watch a show you enjoy. Dust off the sewing machine. Grab those woodworking tools and finally build that birdhouse. Your identity matters.

8. Talk to someone outside your normal orbit.

Join a support group or connect with another caregiver. Sometimes it's comforting to talk to someone who truly understands and chooses to show up anyway.

9. Take time for yourself and your own needs.

Attend your doctor appointments, eat a hot meal, get a haircut without guilt. You can't pour from an empty glass.

10. Set limits for what you can do.

Some tasks are simply beyond what one person can manage, paid or unpaid. Resources exist for a reason; don't be afraid or too proud to use them.

HOME HEALTH & HOSPICE OF DICKINSON COUNTY
PRESENTS

Caregiver Connections

"A circle of understanding, strength, and renewal."

Join us for a welcoming space where caregivers can connect, share experiences, and find support. Each session offers encouragement, practical tips, and resources to help you navigate the challenges of caregiving.

**Join our Caregiver Support Group
sessions on the first and third
Tuesday of every month.**

**Time: 3:00 pm – 5:00 pm
Location: 1111 N Brady St., Abilene**

Caring for you.

What Happened in 2025?



Share the Journey

It's human nature to seek connection. We all want to know that someone outside our normal orbit cares enough to check in and make sure we're doing okay.

When someone enters hospice care, those connections often become even more meaningful. That's where our hospice volunteers make such a powerful difference. Our volunteers take time to sit with patients, listen to their life stories, ask thoughtful questions, or simply share quiet moments together. Sometimes, just being present is the greatest gift of all.

Not comfortable with patient interaction but still want to give back? We also offer in-office volunteer opportunities that support our hospice team behind the scenes. If you're interested in becoming a hospice volunteer, we'd love to hear from you.

📞 Contact: Taylor Knauss, Hospice Volunteer Coordinator

☎ Phone: 785-263-6630



When Time Isn't Enough

They say time heals all wounds—but what happens when it doesn't?

Grief doesn't always follow a predictable timeline. In our Hospice Bereavement program, we've seen that many families initially feel relieved, occupied with planning, or surrounded by out-of-town guests. The full weight of their loss often doesn't settle in until after the funeral, when the house is quiet again. For many, especially those who have lost a spouse, nighttime can feel the heaviest.

At Home Health and Hospice of Dickinson County, we want you to know you don't have to navigate this journey alone.

Beginning February 11th at 2 p.m., we will be offering a 13-week GriefShare support group, hosted at the Home Health and Hospice office in partnership with Community Bible Church. This program is designed to gently guide individuals through the grieving process, offering tools, understanding, and healthy ways to remember and honor loved ones.

If you or someone you know is struggling with grief, we're here to help—one step, one conversation, one moment at a time.

Thank You to 2025 Our Donors

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