

- (1) The patient and his family are considered as a unit;
- (2) An interdisciplinary team is used to assess the medical and social needs of the patient, develop an overall plan of care, and provide coordinated care;
- (3) The patient receives palliative rather than curative types of treatment; and
- (4) Bereavement follow-up is provided to the family.

It is the intent of this Act to affirmatively establish Hospice Care Programs in Maryland by providing potential sources of reimbursement for this type of health care. This Act requires insurance companies and health maintenance organizations, both profit and nonprofit, and nonprofit health service plans to provide health care coverage of hospice care services, as an option, to individuals and groups. In addition, this Act authorizes the Maryland Medical Assistance Program to provide coverage for hospice care services at its option.

The language of this Act, because of practical necessity, has limited the scope of reimbursement provided by insurance companies and the Maryland Medical Assistance Program. Both sources are limited to reimbursement of hospice services provided to patients with a 6 month life expectancy, and who receive services through licensed hospitals, long term care facilities, home health agencies, or other legally authorized facilities. Admittedly, the latter limitation does allow perfunctory latitude for delivery through facilities which do not presently exist in Maryland, such as the autonomous free standing hospice care facility.

In addition to the limitations imposed on both sources of reimbursement, the provision of this Act that amends the Maryland Medical Assistance Program only authorizes reimbursement for hospice care services because of the prediction of substantial budgetary shortages. It must be pointed out, however, that preliminary figures presented to the Hospice Care Reimbursement Study Commission, created by Joint Resolution No. 29 of 1979, indicated that a hospice care program, if implemented, should help reduce the financial shortage projected for the Maryland Medical Assistance Program due to its potential cost savings.

Although this Act imposes limitations and restrictions on a Hospice Care Program, for which reimbursement is available, the ultimate goal of the State of Maryland is to provide reimbursement coverage and assistance for hospice care services provided ~~not only by licensed facilities, but by authorized societies, planning groups, and other persons as well.~~