

STARTING THE JOURNEY HOME

Anna Marie Aita works as Chaplain in the Hospice program of the Visiting Nurses Association of Omaha, NE. She explained that hospice is a philosophy of care designed to provide comfort and support to patients and their families in the terminal phase of illness. Anna Marie is a member of a multidisciplinary team of professionals and volunteers with specialized training and expertise in hospice care. According to Anna Marie, a patient with a terminal illness has to be referred to hospice by a doctor when the patient is expected to live six months or less. Too often patients enter hospice several months later than they should, Anna Marie noted. Hospice addresses physical, emotional and spiritual needs of the patient so they may live as comfortably and fully as possible. Hospice nurses are skilled in pain management. Hospice care is covered by Medicare Part A. Anna Marie explained the Hospice home in Omaha has capacity for 25 patients. There Anna Marie asks patients to review their life-the good and the not so good. She works to reconcile differences between family members. After death Anna Marie leads grief counseling for remaining family members. This can be provided up to 13 months. Anna Marie facilitates Grief groups that provide a way for survivors to cope with their loss of family members.