



# Understanding Care Choices

**Sometimes you need to consider additional medical care choices for your child. It is helpful to learn about the different types of care that may be recommended.**

- **Palliative care** (pronounced pal-lee-uh-tiv) is specialized care for patients with serious health conditions. It focuses on providing relief from symptoms and stress of ongoing medical treatment.

Palliative care involves clinicians from different areas, such as medicine, nursing, social work, child life, spiritual care and different kinds of therapies. Palliative care strives to provide comfort for you and your child. It improves quality of life: physically, psychologically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually.

There are no time restrictions. Palliative care can be received by patients at any age, any time, at any stage of illness, whether or not it is life-limiting. It can be used to avoid making hasty decisions during a time of crisis or acute illness. Most insurance plans, including Medicaid, cover palliative care.

- **Hospice care** is designed to support the patient and family during the end-of-life process. Hospice care focuses on quality of life and comfort rather than aggressive medical treatment. The goal is to give the patient comfortable, pain-free days. It allows your child to live each day as fully as possible. End-of-life care is difficult to discuss. It is okay to think about what you want for your child before it becomes a concern. When hospice is needed, the doctor will make a referral. The hospice team will meet with the patient and family, usually within 48 hours. The team writes a care plan that includes your input. Hospice can be covered in a variety of settings and is typically covered in part by health insurance.
- **Respite care** is a planned break from caregiving. It can be helpful for families who provide round-the-clock or long term, constant care of a child with ongoing health issues. Respite care can relieve the ongoing stress of providing care. Parents may hesitate to seek or use respite care. It can be hard to leave your child in the care of someone else. However, there is evidence that respite care benefits both parents and child.

Respite services can be formal or informal. Informal respite may be having a family member or friend care for your child to allow you time to do something other than caregiving. More formal programs may include both in-home or out-of-home care for a specific time. You may have to ask or advocate for funding for respite.

## Michigan Family to Family Health Information Center

(MIF2F) exists to share resources, information, and learning opportunities for families of children and youth with special health care needs across Michigan, and also for the community partners and healthcare providers who care for them.  
[www.F2FMichigan.org](http://www.F2FMichigan.org)

### MI F2F offers:

- Information and resources related to caring for a child or young adult with special healthcare needs.
- Parent peers and individuals with experience navigating the maze of special health care services and programs.
- A network of Family Leaders across Michigan to help us identify community supports and resources for families.



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