



Why We Are Needed

Most of us have access to high-quality care at the end of life. But even here in Dane County, where some of the world's best medical and hospice resources are located, huge disparities in end-of-life care exist between different segments of our population. A high percentage of those living in the margins of society are unduly affected by untreated or undertreated medical conditions that often result in greater mortality rates, premature death, and unnecessary suffering as they die.

Gaps in the System

Although no official record documents how many of our residents die without adequate shelter or caregiver support each year, we do know the number is significant and climbing. When we surveyed member agencies of the Homeless Services Consortium of Dane County, half of those responding said that end-of-life care for our target population is inadequate. Besides those who die out on the streets, countless more die in places that are ill-equipped to address the unique needs of our most vulnerable and disenfranchised community members. Under the current system,



- none of the homeless shelters in Dane County can accommodate terminally ill patients.
- supportive housing agencies do not have the resources necessary to provide adequate end-of-lifecare.
- assisted-living facilities require residents to have a higher level of self-sufficiency and financial independence than many dying people possess.
- hospitals, skilled nursing homes, and even our local residential hospice center cannot always provide appropriate shelter and the level of attention needed to serve this population.
- environmental factors such as location, accessibility, and general atmosphere of the care setting are big concerns.

Imagine having to face the end of your life without a roof over your head—sick and in pain, out in the elements with no bed, no bathroom, no medicine, and no one to help manage symptoms or provide the most basic support or solace.

Community, Comfort, & Care at Life's End

Who We Serve

Solace's aim is to serve our community's most vulnerable people as they face the end of their lives. Too often overlooked and underserved, our target population includes hospice-eligible individuals who are also experiencing the following:

- Homelessness or housing and food insecurity
- Extreme poverty; insurance insufficiencies
- Trauma and mental/emotional health issues
- Alcoholism and other addiction/substance use disorders
- Social isolation, disenfranchisement, neglect

Solace will serve a diverse community and accepts those of all ages, races, ethnicities, faiths, sexual and gender identities, and people with disabilities.

These are people who must deal with a disproportionate amount of illness and injury at a younger age and with greater severity compared to the general population. Although they suffer many of the same ailments as do others, (e.g., end-stage cancer; heart, lung, and liver diseases; infection; dementia; and other common terminal conditions), they don't have equal access to preventative care, treatments, and medications—nor do they receive proper rest, nutrition, hygiene, and shelter which could help to prevent or even cure these conditions before they become chronic and life limiting.

Referral Sources

We anticipate referrals from a variety of sources including numerous health care, housing, and human-service organizations from throughout Dane County. When evaluating referrals, we take several factors into consideration, such as specific diagnosis, current health status, and suitability for the care we provide. Our team will meet face-to-face with those seeking support to make an assessment and determine more exactly, what, and how services can best be provided. If those who apply for care are not yet ready for hospice, we will also review the availability of other options for care.

Related Demographics

Dane County, January 2019, (Source: The Road Home):

- 3246 Homeless Individuals
- 48% People of Color

Madison, October 2019, (Source: Dean Mosiman, Wisconsin State Journal):

- 229 individuals suffering from chronic homelessness defined as "those who have been homeless for at least 12 months or longer, or four times in three years for a total of 12 months, while struggling with a disabling condition, such as mental illness, drug abuse or a physical disability."

Wisconsin State-wide Survey of Homeless, 2016 (self-reporting):

- 22% had severe mental illness
- 22% were victims of domestic violence
- 15% dealt with chronic substance abuse

Solace Friends, Inc. is a nonprofit organization working to bridge the existing gaps in end-of-life services for people in Dane County.

www.solacefriends.org

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