

Defining HomeCare

WHAT IS HOME CARE?

Home care has a long history of providing quality care to individuals in their homes. A full spectrum of cost-effective services, ranging from high-tech nursing to non-medical assistance with the activities of daily living, are available. Home care services are provided by trained caregivers and include skilled nursing, rehabilitation, and personal care services.

WHO USES HOME CARE?

Most people prefer to stay at home rather than go to a hospital or nursing home when they can no longer manage their own care. Home care is not just an alternative to institutional care – home care services can allow many individuals to avoid institutional care altogether.

Home health agencies in California made more than 9.5 million visits to approximately 650,000 patients in 2000, the latest year for which figures are available. In 2000, nearly 57,000 hospice patients received more than 2.4 million days of care from home health agencies providing hospice programs or services.

HOME CARE'S ROLE IN THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

Home care has a unique position within the health care system because:

- Home care providers' presence in the home allows insight into the actual needs, strengths and weaknesses of patients and their support systems;
- Emphasis is placed on providing care, encouraging patient and family involvement, and fostering independence;
- When an acute episode of care requires hospitalization, home care serves as the intervention before hospitalization, and the care following;
- Hospice care allows terminally ill patients to receive needed care in the comfort of their own homes;
- Home care commonly interfaces with other health care entities, such as outpatient services and residential care facilities;
- By nature of their commitment to home-based care, home care providers support community involvement, including referrals to supportive agencies to maintain patients at home.