

University of Notre Dame Alumni Association

National Hospital Support Program

A Notre Dame Senior Alumni (NDSA) Initiative

Suggestions for Putting the Program into Practice

What it is

The National Hospital Support Program is intended to assist members of the Notre Dame Family when hospitalized while away from home, whether planned in advance or the result of an accident or illness while traveling.

The National Hospital Support program may be adapted by any Notre Dame Club to include assistance to members of the Notre Dame Family living within their local area who are hospitalized locally, or who are confined in a nursing home or similar facility, or who are homebound.

How It Works

A member of the Notre Dame Family who is hospitalized while away from home may obtain support by calling toll-free [1-877-435-7086](tel:1-877-435-7086). In an emergency the caller will be patched thru to the nearest Notre Dame Club. The hospitalized person and member of the ND Club can then talk directly to each other to arrange needed support. If hospitalization is pre-planned for a future date the operator will give the caller's name and pertinent information to a member of the ND Alumni Association staff, who will, in turn, contact the caller about arranging for support by the Notre Dame Club in the hospital's area.

The Notre Dame Family

The Notre Dame Family includes alumni, students, spouses, children, siblings, parents, in-laws, relatives, faculty/staff members and subway alumni (friends of Notre Dame).

Types of Hospitalization

The Hospital Support Program provides support to members of the Notre Dame Family who are hospitalized while away from home for either of the following reasons:

- **Emergency Hospitalization:** Patients and their families who have been injured in an automobile accident, or have a stroke, heart attack, or other type of situation requiring emergency medical care.
- **Pre-Planned Hospitalization:** Patients and their families who come to a local hospital from outside the immediate area for surgery or other medical procedure that has been planned in advance, such as cancer treatment.

Support May Typically Include

- Spending some time with the patient and family, at times just listening.
- Freeing the caregiver so they can leave the hospital for short periods as needed.
- Running simple errands.
- Arranging visits by a priest or lay Eucharistic minister.
- Recommending nearby hotels and restaurants.
- Advising where necessities may be purchased in the vicinity of the hospital.
- Informing the family about places of local interest.
- Assisting with other non-medical needs.

Support Does Not Include

- Providing medical advice.
- Administering medications.
- Financial assistance.
- Transporting ill patients.
- Involvement with hospital and insurance administration problems.
- Staying in an Intensive Care Unit.

Adaptations of the Program.

- Individual ND Clubs may adapt the program to also provide assistance and support to members of the local Notre Dame Family who are hospitalized in the local area.
- The Hospital Support Program may also be adapted by a local Notre Dame Club to provide support assistance to members of the Notre Dame Family who care 24/7 for a homebound spouse.
- The Hospital Support Program may be expanded to provide support assistance to persons confined in nursing homes, assisted living facilities, military hospitals or Veterans Administration (VA) facilities. Support in these cases often involves a longer term commitment than other applications of the program.
- A Notre Dame Club that adapts the Hospital Support Program benefits in two ways: (1) persons who volunteer have additional opportunities to serve, and (2) the experience gained will position the volunteer team to be more effective when emergency situations arise.

Getting Started

- The first step in establishing the National Hospital Support Program in a Club's area is to appoint a Primary Contact Person to receive calls from the toll free operator. It is strongly recommended to also appoint one or more Back-up Contact Persons.
- The second step is joining the National Hospital Support Program by registering the Club's program with the Notre Dame Alumni Association using the Registration Form that follows.
- The third step is recruiting a Support Team of volunteers to assist when support is needed.
- The fourth step is publicizing the Program to local alumni and friends of Notre Dame.
- A final step is soliciting the cooperation of local hospitals in emergencies when the toll free number has not been called.

Building the Club's Team

- Although the Hospital Support program was initiated by Notre Dame Senior Alumni (NDSA), participation in the program is by no means limited to senior alumni. Rather, all members of the Notre Dame Family, regardless of age or gender, are most welcome and encouraged to participate.
- Identify a candidate to be the Club's Primary Contact person. Then, in person, invite him/her to be the Primary Contact Person. Don't overlook spouses for this position.
- Appoint one or more Back-up Contact Persons to receive calls from the toll free operator when the Primary Contact Person is not available.
- In cooperation with the Primary and Back-up Contact Persons, identify candidates for a Support Team to assist in providing support services. The Hospital Support Team affords a unique opportunity for Club members of any age and their spouses to provide meaningful assistance to hospitalized members of the Notre Dame Family.
- Personally contact (in person or by phone) the candidates and their spouses, explain what the program is and what it isn't, and invite them to join the Club's Hospital Support Team. Most females readily volunteer for the program, and often convince their husbands to participate.
- Consider establishing a telephone tree to speed communication when support is needed.

Publicizing the Program

- The Club's Newsletter is the suggested vehicle for publicizing the National Hospital Support Program to local members of the Notre Dame Family. Since any one individual uses the service infrequently, a brief reminder notice in each issue will keep information about the Program in front of the Club members.
- To reach the largest number of people who may use the service provided by the National Hospital Support Program, the Club may wish to mail an initial announcement letter to all alumni and friends of Notre Dame living within the Club's area.

What If the toll free Number Isn't Called?

- There may be several reasons that a member of the Notre Dame Family needing assistance does not call the National Hospital Support Program's toll free number: they don't remember the toll free number, they're 'rattled' and forget the program exists, they are physically incapable, etc. In these instances, the hospital may be the principal link between patient and Notre Dame Club.
- The Federal law that protects an individual's right to privacy prevents a hospital from giving out information without the patient's consent. Most hospitals will, however, gladly inform patients and their family members about Notre Dame's National Hospital Support Program so that the patient or family can directly contact the local Notre Dame Club.
- Ask the Hospital Chaplain to tell out-of-town Emergency Room patients and their families with a possible connection to Notre Dame (ND apparel, class ring, etc.) about the Support Program and give them the Contact Person's phone number.

Further Information

More detailed information about the Hospital Support Program is available by contacting Kathleen Sullivan at the Association office by e-mail at sullivan.6@nd.edu or by phone at 574-631-6186.

05/23/2008