



PeopleInc

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LIFE TRANSITIONS: MERCY DOULA PROGRAM

Providing a support system during end of life



PeopleInc

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The mission of this program is to provide support to a person, staff and/or family during the transition into end of life. The level of support provided is dependent on the person's desire, ability and transparency surrounding the presenting events they currently experience. The hope and desire is to begin working with a person in the preliminary stages of chronic illness and disease progression in order to maximize the supportive benefit a mercy doula can provide.

WHAT IS A MERCY DOULA AND WHAT ARE THE SERVICES THEY PROVIDE?

A doula is a trained support professional working in the field of developmental disabilities who has a driving passion to assist, honor and support someone during a significant transition into end of life. While working with a person, a doula assists someone to resolve business or personal matters, identify their ultimate wishes, increase their overall quality of life, create a desirable atmosphere to the person's liking and in some cases, develop a legacy project or vigil plan. The overall goal and purpose of this support is to ensure that lives are honored as such and become a personal event in time, as opposed to a medical emergency. At the time of death, doulas will also provide ongoing support to families and staff to ensure that the grieving process is initiated with understanding. A follow-up with family is initiated after passing up to eight weeks, with support lasting for the following thirteen months, as needed.

BENEFITS OF A MERCY DOULA

- Advanced Care Planning discussions and management
- Purposeful and meaningful legacy project development, based on life review
- Decreased anxiety and fear of unknown through guidance, education and support
- Emotional, spiritual and social support
- Caregiver respite support for optimal self-care benefits
- Companionship throughout the dying process
- Secondary level of support and communication amongst care team
- Advocacy for control of symptom management
- Sincere honor and respect for life lived, celebratory experience of one's physical journey

CREATING A LEGACY

The focus of a legacy project is the preservation of the past, with honor to life lived by the dying person. Often, we may consider many of our own prized possessions of those who have gone before us to be valuable in the idea of sentiment. In creating a legacy "gift" or project, a dying person holds the control of sharing the most memorable, special, sacred and invaluable aspects of lived experiences. This instills hope for future generations as we transition our focus and divert our energy into a meaningful activity. This may inadvertently give pain and emotional relief through participation, as one of the many benefits of mercy doula-guided care.

VIGIL PLANNING

A vigil plan clearly defines what a person desires at the end of their life. They may choose to include specific requests, such as music (genre, song or band), aromas, lighting, special objects or arrangement of objects, limitations on visitors and overall ambiance of what their environment will look and feel like. A person may choose to include a guest book, or as part of their legacy project, have a scroll or memory box where active participation from visitors is requested.

CONTACT

To learn more about the Life Transitions: Mercy Doula Program, scheduling or additional outreach, email our team at mercydoula@people-inc.org or call Ashley Keagle, director of Life Transitions at 716.880.3703. The doula program also offers Support Meetings for those who may be struggling with grief or looking for peer interactions for bereavement within our residential and day programs.