

# Better Together.



## Questions & Answers

### **What is the nature of the official agreement?**

The merger between Hospice of the Western Reserve and HMC Hospice of Medina County is complete, and the agreement is fully executed. Legally classified as a “member substitution agreement,” it unites two of Northern Ohio’s oldest and most experienced legacy nonprofit providers of hospice care with a shared history of nearly 70 years of service in the region. Both organizations enthusiastically endorse the merger, which will improve efficiency, enhance access to care and expand the scope of services.

### **Why was the decision made to merge the two organizations?**

Healthcare reform requires greater efficiency to address rising operational costs and declining reimbursements and to maintain the highest standards of quality care for patients, their families and the community at large. The affiliation of the two organizations accomplishes these goals.

### **What is the governance structure of the new organization?**

Andy Dunham, previously a member of the HMC Hospice of Medina County Board of Directors, has transitioned into a new role as a member of the Board of Directors of Hospice of the Western Reserve. A newly formed Medina County Advisory Council will play an integral role in representing Medina County, working hand-in-hand with the Board. Hospice of the Western Reserve will oversee leadership, organizational and financial responsibilities.

### **Will there be any layoffs or workforce reductions?**

No. No layoffs are planned.

### **What changes can patients and families expect?**

The merger is not expected to have any impact on patients and families of either organization. The same level of quality care will be delivered by the same community staff and volunteers to whom families are accustomed. Longer range, all of the communities served will benefit from an expanded range of care options and community services.

### **Who should those inquiring about care, needing help or having questions contact in the respective communities?**

The process and contact information remains the same for both organizations:

- **HMC Hospice of Medina County: 330.722.4771, hospiceofmedina.org**
- **Hospice of the Western Reserve: 800.707.8921, hospicewr.org**

### **Will the names or operating locations of either organization change?**

Both organizations will operate under their existing names for one year. Hospice of the Western Reserve and HMC Hospice of Medina County will continue to operate from their established locations.

### **Will the names change after that?**

The agreement stipulates that the HMC Hospice of Medina County name be maintained for one year. Over the next 12 months, branding reflecting the newly merged organizations will gradually evolve to reflect the shared operations of the two organizations. After the first year, as the transition progresses into the next phase, signs, brochures, the website and other assets will ultimately transition to the Hospice of the Western Reserve name.

### **How will cost savings and efficiencies be achieved?**

Immediate and near-term considerations include a focus on the consolidation of operational, technological, purchasing and payroll systems and the standardization of medical record-keeping (EMR) and telecommunications platforms.

### **What else will be changing?**

Transitions will be prioritized, and rolled out in several phases. Among other top priorities will be the implementation of a uniform employment, wage and benefits strategy, solidification of a preferred vendor strategy and the evaluation of the unique service lines each of the two organizations brings to the new affiliation. The best practices of each organization will be merged and incorporated. The result will be a stronger, more nimble and cost-effective organization, ensuring continued growth and responsiveness to community needs.

**Will all services lines (including BridgesHome Health Care and Home Helpers) continue to operate?** Yes, these service lines play a valuable role and will continue to operate. The new organization will evaluate these and all other programs contributed by the two merging agencies to explore the feasibility of their potential expansion across the newly merged organization.

### **How will donations work?**

No changes are planned. Donors can be assured their intentions will be honored. All current and future funds raised in support of HMC Hospice of Medina County will be used for delivery of care benefiting the residents of that community. All naming rights and recognition signage will also remain in place in their current settings.

### **What are some of the anticipated longer-range advantages of the merger?**

Each agency has added programs and services in response to community needs. Many of the programs complement each other. Patients, families and local communities will benefit from an enhanced range of assets and services, including:

- The region's largest team of certified hospice and palliative care professionals
- Three hospice house care centers providing short-term, specialized symptom control and comprehensive support in the final days of life
- Home healthcare and private-pay services
- Palliative care (symptom management) for those with earlier-stage chronic disease
- A specialized pediatric palliative care team
- A combined force of more than 3,350 dedicated volunteers
- One of the nation's most comprehensive grief support programs, available to the community as well as patients' families
- A Hospice Institute providing fellowships, training and continuing education credits to Northern Ohio healthcare professionals, clinical research and an award-winning end-of-life library.
- An advanced illness home care program offered in partnership with insurance providers to help those with earlier-stage chronic illness maintain independence and reduce hospitalizations

### **How will you communicate as the organization continues to evolve?**

We are committed to an ongoing and transparent communication process with our staff, volunteers, donors, families and all other stakeholders. We will provide orientation sessions, quarterly progress updates, town hall meetings and other forums to encourage dialogue and help clarify expectations and goals.

### **Who can be contacted for additional information?**

- **William Finn, President and CEO, Hospice of the Western Reserve** - Phone: 216.383.5293; Email: [BFinn@hospicewr.org](mailto:BFinn@hospicewr.org)