



Weekly Checkup

Variability in Hospice Days

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The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services recently released new Medicare hospice transparency data to the public showing the amount of hospice care used varies widely by state. Enrollment into hospice not only saves the Medicare system money, but also improves care quality. A study in [Health Affairs](#) showed \$2,561 in savings to Medicare for each patient enrolled to hospice in the last 53–105 days of life. Hospice also allows people to remain in their homes with family which [improves quality of life](#). When dividing the total number of hospice days used by the total number of beneficiaries in each state, there is more than a 200 percent difference in the amount of hospice days used. The states with the highest number of days of hospice care per beneficiary are Alabama and South Carolina at 91 days used per beneficiary. The lowest use state is Wyoming—with 44 days of hospice care per beneficiary. The median days/per beneficiary for all states is 64 days.

Medicare has been [focusing more dollar amounts](#) into home health care, hospice is a key component of this area of care. The marked difference in days used shows places for further study and improvement.

