POLICY

High Peaks Hospice (HPH) provides services that are delivered, according to the patient/family care plan, in all care settings, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Such services shall include, but not be limited to, nursing, physician, and pharmacy services. Outside of regular scheduled office hours, On-Call Services are provided. (See Clinical Policy “On-Call” CP245) This is to ensure the best case and can prevent more costly routes of care.

PROCEDURE

1. Normal work hours for the two clinical offices are 8:00 am to 4:00 pm Monday through Friday. The offices are closed on the weekends and holidays as per our annual holiday schedule. There may be other closures due to weather, meetings, or other unforeseen incidents, such as power failures. When the offices are closed there will be an “On-Call” service provided to cover patient needs.

2. The HPH on-call system provides access to a hospice nurse between the hours of 4:00 pm and 8:00 am, Monday through Friday, and from 4:00 pm Friday to 8:00 am Monday (weekend) and for 24 hours on holidays or during office closures.
   A. All incoming telephone calls after regular office hours are directed to an answering service that in turn contacts the “On-Call” Hospice Triage nurse (RN).
   B. The Patient Care Coordinator (PCC) or designee will create a monthly Triage RN schedule. The PCC will notify the answering services of the schedule and any changes to the schedule.
   C. The On-Call Triage position will be covered primarily by full time On-Call Triage RNs. Due to illness, vacation or holiday time, this position may be filled by a per diem On-Call Triage RN.
   D. Each clinical office will prepare and maintain a monthly on-call schedule for the On-Call Visit nurse. A copy will be forwarded to the Business Office. Any changes will also be reported to the Business Office.

Refer to the Clinical Policy “On-Call”, CP245, for more information.
3. The On-Call Triage RN should read progress reports of all admissions for each day of their shift. In addition, they should access the progress reports for all offices in order to have the most recent information on all patients.
   A. The answering service has 10 minutes in which to contact the On-Call Triage RN before using the On-Call back up system. (See Para 4 below for further information)
   B. The On-Call Triage RN will contact the answering service within 10 minutes to acknowledge receipt of the page and obtain pertinent information regarding the nature of the call.
   C. On-Call Triage RN will contact the caller and:
      1) Assess the situation (if there is an issue that has not been identified in the progress report, the Triage RN should err on the safe side and call the On-Call Visit nurse with questions and/or concerns)
      2) Provide the needed information or support on the phone
      3) Direct the On-Call Visit nurse to make a visit as needed. (If the family contacts the On-Call Triage RN more than twice for the same or a second concern a visit should be considered.) The PCC or designee will be kept informed as appropriate.

4. A back up on-call system is available if the first On-Call Triage RN does not respond to the answering service within 10 minutes or simultaneous calls occur.
   A. If the answering service has not made contact with the On-Call Triage RN within 10 minutes of the first attempt, the covering Supervisor will be contacted.
   B. An RN Supervisor will be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to all HPH patients. A schedule will be maintained by the Administrative Office of this coverage.

5. Physician Services: The Hospice Medical Director or designee, as well as the patient’s attending physician or designee, will be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to all HPH patients.

6. Pharmacy Services: 24-Hour availability of medication, if necessary, is provided by a volunteer pharmacy for the Northern Office and a 24 hour CVS in Saratoga Springs for the Southern Office.

7. 24-Hour Intake/Admission Process: Any inquiry may be made 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. All inquiries made after office hours, on weekends or holidays will be taken by the answering service and given to the On-Call Triage RN who will then communicate with the covering RN Supervisor for directions on follow-up.

LAST REVIEW DATE: IDT 07/26/17, Clinical Comm 08/08/17, BOD 03/26/18

LAST UPDATED: Comp Coord 07/21/17, 05/23/18, 07/13/18

BOARD APPROVAL: May 8, 2018