

# HEALTH CARE

## Cape hospice, RI group to merge

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The Hyannis-based **HopeHealth** announced Wednesday it will partner with a Rhode Island organization to become the largest nonprofit hospice and palliative care provider in New England.

The merger with Home Care & Hospice of New England will strengthen HopeHealth and allow for expansion of programs serving the chronically ill and people at the end of life, said David Rehm, the retiring CEO of HopeHealth.

"The delivery of health care has gotten increasingly complex over the last several years," Rehm said in a teleconference with a reporter and Diana Franchitto, president and CEO of Home & Hospice Care of Rhode Island and Visiting Nurse Home Care, which comes under the umbrella of Home Care & Hospice of New England.

Affiliating HopeHealth with the Providence-based programs will allow them to become more efficient and cost effective and create a more robust infrastructure while giving the organizations a bigger "footprint," Rehm said.

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"It really is an exciting and wonderful opportunity," he said.

The merged organizations will operate under the name HopeHealth, with Franchitto at the helm in Providence. The merger gives HopeHealth a budget of \$75 million with a reach extending from Rhode Island through Southeastern Massachusetts.

Home & Hospice Care of Rhode Island — which will be known as Hope Hospice and Palliative Care of Rhode Island — is the second oldest hospice in the U.S., and has a unique academic affiliation with the medical school at Brown University, Franchitto said.

Students and residents at Warren Alpert Medical School rotate through hospice inpatient and outpatient programs to learn about caring for the seriously ill, Franchitto said.

"Hospice and palliative care is an area of unique specialization," she said.

The expertise will allow the newly reconfigured HopeHealth to bring world-class hospice and palliative care to the Cape's hospitals and nursing homes, Rehm said.

Rehm and Franchitto said the new partnership is not expected at this time to affect the status of the 230 employees already working for HopeHealth and the 440 people working for Home Care & Hospice of New England.

"This is an opportunity for job growth," said Franchitto, who said she expects the visiting nurse program to eventually expand to Cape Cod.

Rehm — who headed Home & Hospice Care of Rhode Island from 1986 to 1998 — plans to retire following a leadership transition period with Franchitto. The merger is expected to be complete by early 2016 at the latest, Franchitto said.

Under Rehm's tenure, HopeHealth changed to its new name in 2012 after 30 years as Hospice and Palliative Care of Cape Cod. He also oversaw the organization's merger in 2010 with Alzheimer's Services of Cape Cod & the Islands and extended its reach to a six-county area stretching from Martha's Vineyard to Boston.

The new affiliation will allow HopeHealth to expand its physician home visitation program, Hope HouseCalls, officials with the organization said.

HopeHealth currently serves 1,100 patients and clients, while the Rhode Island-based hospice and visiting nurse organizations serve 1,200, company officials said.

Health care mergers can allow the newly created larger organizations to become more efficient and better monitors of quality with improved access to the capital needed for such things as linked electronic medical records, said Alison Cuellar, associate professor of health policy at George Mason University in Fairfax, Va.

"The downside is prices go up," especially if the merger results in less competition in the area, she said.

"This is happening everywhere in health care," said Howard Gleckman, a resident fellow at the Urban Institute in Washington, D.C.

With Medicare reimbursements being cut, "you need to get big," he said. "Scale matters when you are buying supplies."

Even organizations caring for very ill and dying patients need to market themselves, Gleckman said. "It's hard to do when you're little and they're big."

HopeHealth and Home Care



& Hospice of New England will maintain subsidiary local boards while the parent company will have a board of directors with two co-chairs and equal representation from each organization, according to company officials.

Rehm said key donors have been notified of the affiliation and are pleased that administrative services will become less costly.



**HopeHealth's David Rehm, president and CEO, and Lise Lambert, chief growth officer, in 2013 at the then new sign for the company on Attucks Lane in Hyannis. STEVE HEASLIP/CAPE COD TIMES FILE**