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*Adapted from the Quality and Safety Education for Nurses website at <http://www.qsen.org/>.

Decision Making at the End of Life

Discussions concerning the possibility that a child's illness or condition is not curable and that death is an inevitable outcome cause everyone involved a great deal of stress. Physicians, other members of the health care team, and families must consider all information regarding the child's situation and make decisions that all parties agree to and that will have a profound impact on the child and family.

Ethical Considerations in End-of-Life Decision Making

A number of ethical concerns arise when parents and health care professionals are deciding on the best course of care for the dying child. Many parents and health care providers are concerned that not offering treatment that would cause potential pain and suffering but might extend life would be considered euthanasia or assisted suicide. To eliminate such concerns, it is necessary to understand the various terms. **Euthanasia** involves an action carried out by a person other than the patient to end the life of the patient suffering from a terminal condition. The intent of this action is based on the belief that the act is “putting the person out of his or her misery.” This action has also been called **mercy killing**. **Assisted suicide** occurs when someone provides the patient with the means to end his or her life and the patient uses that means to