

WHAT IS PALLIATIVE CARE?

Palliative care is about improving patient quality of life by treating the person as well as a disease.

- This team-based approach to care provides an extra layer of support to relieve pain, symptoms, and stress of serious illness.
- Palliative care can be delivered alongside curative treatment at any stage of a serious illness, or can transition to hospice care.
- It helps both the patient and the family or care partner and is appropriate at any age and any stage.

THE VALUE OF PALLIATIVE CARE

Palliative care improves patient outcomes, clinician satisfaction, and can lower health care costs.

- Studies have shown palliative care leads to increased patient and family satisfaction, fewer unnecessary tests and procedures, reduced time spent in intensive care units, and lower chances that patients will be readmitted.
- A 2010 study published in the New England Journal of Medicine reported that patients receiving early palliative care alongside cancer treatment lived longer, felt better, were less depressed, were less likely to die in the hospital, and were less likely to be in the hospital in their last month of life than similar patients getting only cancer care but not receiving palliative care.

BARRIERS TO PALLIATIVE CARE

Too many Minnesota patients and caregivers face barriers.

- Lack of understanding about palliative care remains one of the chief barriers preventing access.
 - 33% of patients surveyed believed palliative care is intended only for end-of-life care, or only for patients who will never be cured.
- Where you live matters, especially for palliative care availability and accessibility.
- Nationally, only 6% of cancer patients report having been referred specifically to a palliative care or quality of life specialist.
- Access to palliative care in Minnesota is uneven depending on your insurance status.
 - Medical Assistance and MinnesotaCare do not offer a palliative care benefit



of patients and caregivers want this type of integrated care once they understand it using their own terms, and they believe people should be educated about it

THE PALLIATIVE CARE ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Minnesota Palliative Care Advisory Council was created by the legislature in 2017.

- The Council is made up of a variety of volunteer professionals from across Minnesota who have palliative care experience or expertise in the palliative care delivery models.
- The Council must conduct an assessment of the availability of palliative care in Minnesota, provide an analysis of barriers to greater access to palliative care, and provide recommendations for legislative action.
- The Council has worked with stakeholders and partners to identify opportunities to improve access to palliative care, assessed the availability of pediatric palliative care, consulted lawmakers on pain management, and provided recommendations on workforce development.
- The Council's funding was not renewed (\$44k a year) in 2019. The funding supports MDH's staff management of the Council and its needed resources.

LEGISLATIVE SOLUTIONS

Support HF 2517 (Reyer)/SF 2400 (Housley), which would fund the Minnesota Palliative Care Advisory Council and its work to advance this type of care. The money would go to the Minnesota Department of Health.

Support HF 3148 (Reyer)/ SF 2912 (Housley), legislation to modify the definition of palliative care in state statute

- State statute incorrectly defines palliative care as care for incurable diseases.
- The Palliative Care Advisory Council included this as a legislative recommendation in their 2021 and 2022 legislative reports.
- A clear and accurate definition will help with current efforts to improve public education and awareness, and future efforts to remove barriers to palliative care.

A CAREGIVER PERSPECTIVE

“As a nurse and caregiver, palliative care is so important to me. My dad died of pancreatic cancer in 2011. Having access to palliative care allowed my dad to have a high quality of life until he passed away. His care allowed me to be a daughter rather than a nurse—he was even mowing my lawn the week before he passed away because that is what he wanted to do!

Palliative care treats the side effects of pain, symptoms, and emotional distress among people with serious illnesses and is for any stage or prognosis of a serious condition. It helps so many Minnesotans.” *-Pam Fontem, Red Wing*



“Palliative care gave my dad a longer, fuller life when he had cancer.”

- Pam Fontem
Cancer advocate and caregiver from Red Wing



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