

Joint Commission Certification for Palliative Care



Recognizing hospital
inpatient programs
that demonstrate
exceptional patient and
family-centered care.



Joint Commission Certification for Palliative Care

is designed to recognize hospital inpatient programs that demonstrate exceptional patient and family-centered care in order to optimize the quality of life for patients with serious illnesses.

Palliative care is specialized medical care focused on providing patients with relief from the symptoms, pain, and the stress of a serious illness—whatever the diagnosis or prognosis.

Certification for Palliative Care emphasizes:

- A formal, organized, inpatient palliative care program led by an interdisciplinary team whose members possess the requisite expertise in palliative care.
- A special focus on patient and family engagement.
- Processes which support the coordination of care and communication among all care settings and providers.

To be eligible for Certification for Palliative Care, a hospital must:

- Follow an organized approach supported by an interdisciplinary team of health professionals.
- Use standardized clinical practice guidelines or evidence-based practice.
- Have the ability to direct the clinical management of patients and coordinate care.
- Provide the full range of palliative care services to hospitalized patients 24 hours per day, seven days per week, either with on-site staff or on-call.
- Use performance measurement to improve its performance over time.

Benefits of Joint Commission Certification for Palliative Care:

- Certification is an independent evaluation that validates the quality of the palliative care program.
- The standards for certification will help a hospital build a better, more organized program that tailors treatment to individual needs.
- Certification will help the hospital achieve regular and more consistent flows of data and information.

Certified programs have reported measurable improvements in:

- Improved patient satisfaction with their care experience.
- Increased communication and enhanced coordinated care across settings.
- Decreased readmissions in both ED utilization and hospitalizations.
- Increased allocation of clinical staff and IT resources.



Demonstrate your commitment to excellence

The Joint Commission Certification for Palliative Care is evidence that a quality program is focused on achieving optimum care for patients with serious illness. Patients, families, employers and providers will benefit from palliative care programs that have been evaluated by The Joint Commission for compliance with relevant standards, for effective use of clinical practice guidelines, and for the use of performance measures and improvement.

For more information about the
Certification for Palliative Care, please call (630) 792-5291
or email palliative@jointcommission.org.

The following organizations encourage achievement of Joint Commission Certification in Palliative Care

- American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine
- Center to Advance Palliative Care
- National Palliative Care Research Center

“Palliative care is focused on maximizing quality of life for seriously ill patients and their families. Over 1900 leading U.S. hospitals today have a palliative care team, and Joint Commission recognition of the importance of palliative care to overall quality of care represents a giant step forward for the field. I know I am joined by colleagues across the country when I express my appreciation to The Joint Commission for helping to ensure that all palliative care teams deliver care of uniformly high quality.”

– Diane E. Meier, M.D.

Center to Advance Palliative Care
and Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai

“... The preparation forced us to review all of our policies and processes, reinforcing the areas where we were already strong and identifying areas that needed shoring up. The review itself was also informative and meaningful, as we are able to “show off” our program within our own institution and also find a few blind spots that needed added attention. We strongly recommend the process!”

–Timothy E. Quill, M.D., FACP, FAAHPM

Professor of Medicine, Psychiatry,
Medical Humanities and Nursing
Director of the Palliative Care Division,
Department of Medicine
Univ. of Rochester Medical Center, Rochester, NY
Past President, American Academy of
Hospice and Palliative Medicine



“This recognition has strongly encouraged our discipline to create high quality programming and rigor around the metrics used by hospital-based palliative care programs. Seriously ill patients directly benefit from your focus on reliable pain and symptom management, communication and documentation regarding treatment preferences and coordinated care across settings.

Our three New York hospitals have seen first-hand the benefits from Certification in Palliative Care and commend The Joint Commission’s efforts to improve care for people with serious illness through ongoing certification in palliative care.”



Dana Lustbader, M.D.

North Shore-LIJ Health System
Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai
and Beth Israel Medical Center

Sean Morrison, M.D.

National Palliative Care Research Center
Hertzberg Palliative Care Institute
Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai

Russell Portenoy, M.D.

Beth Israel Medical Center



“Multiple studies have demonstrated that palliative care improves quality of life for persons living with serious illness by treating pain and other distressing symptoms; coordinating and strengthening the process of patient-physician communication and decision-making; and enhancing care coordination. The Joint Commission’s Advanced Certification Program for Palliative Care recognizes hospital inpatient programs that demonstrate exceptional patient and family-centered care and optimizes the quality of life for patients with serious illness. Our mutual commitment to developing the knowledge and skills that will further promote and advance the field of palliative care will ultimately improve the care for persons living with serious illness.”



– R. Sean Morrison, M.D.

National Palliative Care Research Center;
Hertzberg Palliative Care Institute;
Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai