

12.7 Palliative Care

Palliative Care is an additional layer of support for patients facing life-changing illness. Palliative Care helps patients and families cope with the stress of a serious illness, manage symptoms and engage in meaningful goals of care conversations. This service supports patients while they continue treatments that may cure or heal. Palliative care can be provided in the home, in a custodial residence, or in our contracted inpatient facilities, depending on the needs of the patient.

Admission Criteria

- Primary medical provider indicates 12-24 month probability of death
- Frequent ER or hospital visits (4 or more) due to serious illness in last 12 months
- Progression of illness over past six (6) months
- Stage 3 or 4 cancer; or curative cancer with potentially toxic treatments
- New diagnosis of life limiting illness
- Unintentional and consistent weight loss over six (6) months
- Multiple chronic illnesses or any single chronic illness which remains symptomatic or limits function, despite maximal treatment
- Dementia causing inability to perform two (2) or more activities of daily living
- Continued oxygen dependence, shortness of breath, or adverse cardiac symptoms brought on by exertion – despite continued treatment
- Patient is not a candidate for curative therapy or patient or family request for treatment with low probability for success
- Patient, family or physician uncertainty regarding the appropriateness, usefulness or desirability of available treatment options
- Patient/family need assistance with advanced care planning

Note: Referrals may come from the physician, patient, family, friends, social workers or clergy.

Services may include visits and telephone support provided by:

- Palliative care physicians
- Advanced practice nurses
- Skilled nursing
- Social work

Palliative Care patients will receive care and services consistent with the needs identified in the continuing evaluation process and consistent with their benefit plan description.

Who Provides the Palliative Services?

An interdisciplinary team with shared responsibility develops a care plan and provides care. The palliative care Medical Director, palliative physicians, advanced practice nurses, and registered nurses manage symptoms, assess home safety, assist with advanced care planning, and monitor medications and medical supplies. Social workers assist patients with accessing community services.

What Are the Benefits of Palliative Care?

- Less depression and anxiety
- Better quality of life
- Fewer ER and hospital visits
- Follow-up support and feedback

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- Help with social services

How Do I Initiate a Referral?

Place a call to a contracted palliative care agency (found in our Health Plan of Nevada online directories). Individualized care is available 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week.