



CENTER FOR IMPROVING  
**VALUE** IN HEALTH CARE

## PALLIATIVE CARE PROGRAM

### Supporting the Advancement of Palliative Care Services in Colorado and Beyond

*"Palliative Care" means specialized medical care for people with serious illnesses. This type of care is focused on providing patients with relief from the symptoms, pain and stress of serious illness, whatever the diagnosis. The goal is to improve quality of life for both the patient and the family. Palliative care is provided by a team of physicians, nurses and other specialists who work with a patient's other health care providers to provide an extra layer of support. Palliative care is appropriate at any age and at any stage in a serious illness and can be provided together with curative treatment. Unless otherwise indicated, the term "palliative care" is synonymous with the terms "comfort care," "supportive care," and similar designations." (6 Colorado Code of Regulations, 1011-1, 2.2.12)*

The Center for Improving Value in Health Care (CIVHC) is committed to supporting efforts to expand and enhance approaches to health care that embody the Triple Aim (better health, better care, lower cost). Palliative care lies squarely within the intersection of these three goals, impacting the lives not only of the patients but also of their families/care givers. Palliative care guides the care process of patients with serious illness to ensure that the course of treatment reflects patients' values (better care), which in turn improves quality of life and reduces suffering (better health). This often leads to lower costs for both the patient and the system—well-managed pain reduces the frequency of emergency room visits and acute admissions, and health crises drop because patients and their families are in close communication with their care team.

Currently in Colorado, there are many community-based groups and individuals working to expand access to and delivery of palliative care and related services (such as advance care planning). Many of these efforts are regional and led by small, mission-focused organizations. The value of these efforts is not always widely known outside of the communities served, and there is great potential opportunity to capture, communicate and connect organizations in order to share best practices and accelerate change.

Educating communities and policymakers on the value of palliative care is one of CIVHC's primary goals. Laying the groundwork for a common understanding of the powerful impact of palliative care is an essential step toward systemic change. Before we can expect palliative care to become a standard part of serious illness care, we must support a widespread understanding of what palliative care is and the value it brings to patients, their families, and the health care system. CIVHC is uniquely situated to identify the return on investment (both economic and social) of palliative care through our long-held connections with the palliative care community in Colorado and nationally, as well as our role as the administrator of the Colorado All Payer Claims Database (CO APCD).

#### Overall Palliative Care Program Goals

1. To provide a central resource for convening and education on palliative care in Colorado.
2. To report information regarding the spread and utilization of palliative care in Colorado.
3. To identify the return on investment in palliative services in Colorado and communicate that information to policy makers, providers, and patients themselves.
4. To ensure that all actors in palliative care in Colorado have a venue to communicate with each other.



CENTER FOR IMPROVING  
**VALUE** IN HEALTH CARE

5. Continue to develop the national reputation of Colorado's palliative care work through participation and presentation at national conferences and engagement with national associations and coalitions.

## Program Components

**Goal 1: Provide a central resource for convening and education on palliative care in Colorado.**

### Activities

- Develop a website for policymakers, communities, health care providers and patients that uses online resources to create collaborative communities and provide education and resources, similar to the successful HealthDoers network, funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Features will include:
  - Highlighting programs in Colorado and across the country;
  - Providing access to available local and national resources;
  - Communicating opportunities for funding or education for palliative care;
  - Identifying best practices; and
  - Providing a space for communication between programs to share ideas and problem solve together.
- Whitepapers including:
  - Costs of serious illness treatment and comparisons of persons receiving discrete palliative care services with those who have not (CIVHC is currently developing these methods collaboratively with researchers/practitioners from around the state).
  - Models of palliative care in different settings.
  - Ongoing reviews of literature regarding palliative care outcomes or best practices.
  - Others as suggested by the palliative care communities.
- Explore creation of the Mountain States Palliative Care Conference
  - Annual conference to support statewide and regional networking and connection between disparate programs and interest groups.
  - Workgroups to help disseminate best practices and address issues specific to the region (working with frontier communities, distance access to palliation, overcoming cultural barriers, etc.)
  - Will do research on feasibility and interest, as well as sponsorship.
  - In collaboration with Rocky Mountain Hospice and Palliative Care, if interested.

**Goal 2: Report information regarding the spread and utilization of palliative care in Colorado**

### Activities

- Creation of dataset to track utilization and related costs of palliative services.
- Development and maintenance of a panel of metrics to monitor and report on palliative care services, access and outcomes.
- Ongoing collaboration with providers and palliative care researchers to develop new approaches to evaluate palliative care services or lack thereof statewide.
- Biennial structured-interview survey of the state of palliative care in Colorado. CIVHC has conducted a similar survey twice in the past nine years, looking at the utilization of palliative care across the state. The survey captures growth in palliative care delivery, functional definitions of



CENTER FOR IMPROVING  
**VALUE** IN HEALTH CARE

palliative care, dedicated staff time, funding sources, and other measures to capture the experience of palliative care on the ground. CIVHC feels it is important to conduct this study regularly because of the rapid growth and diversity of palliative care programs. Recent movement in palliative care on the national front indicates that the study would be most useful if conducted biannually.

- Track and report on trends discovered from the statewide surveys.

***Goal 3: Identify the return on investment in palliative services in Colorado and communicate that information to policy makers, providers, and patients themselves.***

*Activities*

- Work with local and national partners to use claims data and other clinical data sources to help define the value proposition of palliative care, both financially and in terms of patient, family and caregiver quality of life.
- Establish partnerships with research organizations to supplement existing work with data from CIVHC and the expertise and perspective of our working groups.

***Goal 4: Ensure that all actors in palliative care in Colorado have a venue to communicate with each other.***

*Activities*

- Statewide Network Analysis using the PARTNER Tool (<http://partnertool.net/>) to demonstrate how palliative care providers and stakeholders are connected, how resources are leveraged and exchanged, the levels of trust, and identify gaps in the network.
- Quarterly educational/networking convening opportunities:
  - Spotlight palliative programs across the state.
  - Community discussions of how we can measure palliative care in Colorado.
  - Continued identification of gaps/needs through community discussion.
- Bimonthly updates via webinar, newsletter, and social media to stakeholders on current efforts to provide or expand palliative care throughout Colorado and nationally, including work on advance care planning and respite care services.
- Encourage ongoing communication and collaboration through an online platform, facilitated by CIVHC.

***Goal 5: Continue to develop the national reputation of Colorado's palliative care work through participation and presentation at national conferences and engagement with national associations and coalitions.***

*Activities*

- Attendance at annual conferences for the Center to Advance Palliative Care, The Coalition to Transform Advanced Care, and others as identified.
- National submission of work coming out of Colorado palliative care efforts and CIVHC to enhance Colorado's presence in the national dialogue.
  - Via poster presentations, proposals for panels, hosting roundtables at national events, and speaking opportunities.
- Enhanced collaboration with national palliative care interest groups, such as the Center to Advance Palliative Care and the Coalition to Transform Advanced Care, to support work happening across the nation.