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NASW Leadership in Palliative & Hospice Social Work

Introduction

Palliative and hospice social work is a significant and growing specialty area of practice requiring specialized knowledge and skills. The profession's leadership in hospice and palliative care necessitates a multipronged approach: enhancing social work practice in palliative and hospice care; advocating both for palliative and hospice social work and for consumers who use these services; and educating the public about palliative care, hospice, and how social workers support individuals and families coping with serious or life-limiting illness.

Enhancing Social Work Practice

STANDARDS OF PRACTICE. The NASW *Standards for Palliative & End of Life Care* (2004) constitute the foundation of NASW's work in palliative, hospice, and end-of-life care and continue to guide social work practice. As with all standards, NASW developed the palliative and end-of-life care standards to benefit clients. The standards achieve this goal by guiding and enhancing

the practice of social workers, who are the primary audience for this publication and for all NASW standards. At the same time, NASW develops standards to educate the public—to help other service providers, employers, policymakers, the media, and, of course, consumers understand the social work role in palliative and end-of-life care.

CONTINUING EDUCATION. In 2004, NASW developed a web-based educational (WebEd) course, *Understanding End of Life Care: The Social Worker's Role*, to help social workers understand the complexities of end-of-life care and to provide information, skills, and resources to enhance social work practice with individuals and families at the end of life. The course was available to the public, free of charge, through NASW's WebEd platform from 2004 to 2011. During that time, more than 40,000 social workers completed the course. In 2009, NASW launched another WebEd course, *Achieving Cultural Competence to Reduce Health Disparities at the End of Life*. More than 20,000 people completed the disparities course during the two years it was available to the public. Both courses remain available through NASW's Professional Education and Training Center.

Statistics

- More than 40,000 individuals have completed NASW's web-based course, *Understanding End of Life Care: The Social Worker's Role*, since 2004, and more than 20,000 have completed *Achieving Cultural Competence to Reduce Health Disparities in End of Life Care* since 2009.
- Within the past five years, more than 5,000 continuing education credits have been awarded for completion of eight NASW teleconferences or webinars addressing palliative and hospice care.
- Almost 600 MSWs and more than 50 BSWs have earned NASW's social work credentials in hospice and palliative care since 2008.
- One thousand members of NASW's Grassroots Advocacy Network emailed their Congressional representatives in support of the HELP Act this year.
- Mary Raymer's article, "The Role of Social Work in Hospice and Palliative Care" (2005), remains one of the most popular articles on *Help Start Here* since the consumer website's launch seven years ago.



The Association has also offered multiple teleconferences and webinars addressing a variety of topics in palliative and hospice care. Recordings and transcripts of these national programs remain available on the NASW Lunchtime Series and Specialty Practice Sections web pages. In-person conferences have also provided learning and networking opportunities for hospice and palliative care social workers. In 2010, NASW held a hospice social work practice conference in conjunction with the NHPCO Clinical Team Conference. About 300 participants participated in the conference, which featured nationally recognized social work experts in hospice and palliative care. The upcoming practice conference, *Restoring Hope: The Power of Social Work*, scheduled for July 2012, also includes sessions dedicated to palliative and hospice care. Moreover, some chapter activities, such as annual conferences and other programs, provide education on hospice and palliative care.

CREDENTIALS. Working in collaboration with the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO), NASW has developed two advanced practice specialty credentials for social workers in hospice and palliative care: one for master's-level social workers (Advanced Certified Hospice and Palliative Social Worker, or ACHP-SW) and another for bachelor's-level social workers (Certified Hospice and Palliative Social Worker, or CHP-SW). These credentials recognize professional experience, ongoing education, and documented competency in palliative and hospice social work practice.

Development of the credentials was spurred by a change in federal regulations allowing individuals without social work degrees to fulfill social work roles in hospice programs that receive Medicare or Medicaid funding (Medicare and Medicaid Programs: Hospice Conditions of Participation Final Rule, 2008). In the absence of strong federal personnel requirements for social work, the new hospice and palliative care credentials help social workers distinguish themselves from medical social services staff who do not possess social work degrees. The credentials also signify the growth of palliative and hospice care as a specialty area of social work practice—progress indicated in other disciplines by multiple credentials in hospice and palliative care administration and nursing (National Board for Certification of Hospice and Palliative Nurses, 2012) and both board certification in hospice and palliative medicine and a hospice medical director certification (American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine, n.d.). In the past four years, almost 650 social workers have obtained either the ACHP-SW or CHP-SW.

Macro-Level Advocacy

ASSOCIATION POLICIES. NASW's work to enhance social workers' knowledge and skills in palliative and hospice care is complemented by the Association's macro-level advocacy on behalf of both the profession and clients. NASW's advocacy regarding federal and state legislation, regulations, and other policy developments is guided by policies adopted by the Delegate Assembly and published in *Social Work Speaks* (NASW, 2012).

LEGISLATION. During the 112th Congress, NASW has supported the Hospice Evaluation and Legitimate Payment (HELP) Act (Senate Bill 722/House Bill 3506), which implements various changes to ensure continued delivery of high-quality hospice services. The Association not only wrote a letter thanking Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR) for introducing the bill (Clark, 2011, October 27), but also mobilized its advocacy network to increase cosponsorship of the bill. About 1,000 social workers and other grassroots activists responded to the NASW legislative alert. At the time of this publication, 47 representatives and 16 senators had signed on as cosponsors of the HELP Act.ⁱ

REGULATIONS. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has put forward multiple regulations to implement the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (2010), and NASW has used this regulatory process to advocate for palliative and hospice care. In August 2010, the Association wrote a letter to HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius and then-CMS administrator Donald Berwick, advocating that advance care planning be added as a voluntary service provided during the Medicare annual wellness visit. Though the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) approved the addition, the Administration reversed the decision the month the change was to go into effect (January 2011), saying more time was needed for public comment on the issue.

More recently, NASW advocated that CMS add quality measures in hospice and palliative care to its requirements for Accountable Care Organizations (ACOs) (Clark, 2011, June 6) and that HHS add hospice and palliative care to the Essential Health Benefits package offered by each state insurance exchange (Clark, 2011, October 26). Unfortunately, HHS did not implement either of these recommendations.

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT. Health care organizations and professionals are increasingly expected to demonstrate the quality and outcomes of their services using performance measures. The nonprofit National Quality Forum (NQF) works to improve health care quality by establishing national priorities and goals and

endorsing quality measures. NQF provides input on performance measurement to HHS, which, in turn, may require health care providers to report on particular quality measures. When NQF released, for public comment, a draft report on performance measurement for hospice and palliative care (2012), NASW advocated for measures addressing both psychosocial concerns and the inclusion of professional social workers in the interdisciplinary team.

COALITION WORK. NASW leverages its advocacy activities by working in collaboration with multiple coalitions. One such coalition is the National Coalition for Hospice and Palliative Care, a group of six national organizations that advocates on behalf of patients, families, and providers addressing serious or life-limiting illness in all settings. In addition to advocating for some of the aforementioned bills, regulations, and measures, the coalition has advocated recently for palliative and hospice care in comments submitted to other entities:

- Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction ("Super Committee")
- Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI)
- National Quality Forumⁱⁱ

The National Coalition for Hospice and Palliative Care also developed, and is in the process of revising, *Clinical Practice Guidelines for Quality Palliative Care* (National Consensus Project for Quality Palliative Care, 2009). These voluntary, consensus-based guidelines describe the core precepts and structures of hospice and clinical palliative care programs. The first edition of the Guidelines, published in 2004, was adopted by the National Quality Forum as part of NQF's *National Framework and Preferred Practices for Palliative and Hospice Care Quality*. The coalition updated the Guidelines in 2009 and has begun work on the third edition, which will be released in 2013.

ACCREDITATION. NASW influences service delivery on a macro level by working with the Joint Commission, which accredits and certifies almost 20,000 health care organizations across the United States. The Joint Commission's Home Care program accredits both hospice and home

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Standards for
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health organizations. As a member of the Joint Commission's Home Care Professional and Technical Advisory Committee, NASW helps shape the standards and goals that guide daily operation of accredited hospice programs.ⁱⁱⁱ As of September 2011, the Joint Commission offers advanced certification for hospital-based, inpatient palliative care programs. NASW and other members of the National Coalition for Hospice and Palliative Care had an opportunity to dialogue with key Joint Commission staff about the new certification in July 2011. The Association used this occasion to educate Joint Commission staff about social work certification in hospice and palliative care.

SOCIAL WORK POLICY INSTITUTE. The Social Work Policy Institute (SWPI), a think tank within the NASW Foundation, convened an invitational symposium on hospice social work in 2010. Social work practitioners, administrators, and researchers joined representatives of federal government agencies and national nonprofit organizations to discuss opportunities, challenges, and intersections in hospice social work practice, research, and policy. The symposium report is available online (Social Work Policy Institute, 2010).

Consumer Education

NASW recognizes that public education is integral both to helping consumers understand the social work role in palliative and hospice care and to increasing access to services. The NASW consumer website, *Help Starts Here*, includes sections addressing advance care planning, caregiving, death and dying, grief and loss, living with illness, pain, and specific medical conditions. Consumers may also use the National Social Worker Finder, which may be accessed from *Help Starts Here*, to find social workers with expertise in specialties such as grief and loss, pain management, and physical illness or disability. Moreover, as an annual supporter of National Healthcare Decisions Day (April 16), NASW promotes advance care planning and the social work role therein (Pace, 2012).

Conclusion

NASW supports palliative and hospice social work by developing resources for practitioners,

advocating with policymakers, and fostering awareness among consumers and the public. The Association will continue to promote palliative and hospice social work, in collaboration with its partners, to ensure that individuals and families facing serious or life-limiting illness receive quality care.

ⁱ Information regarding the status of all federal legislation is available on THOMAS, a website of the Library of Congress (<http://thomas.loc.gov>).

ⁱⁱ Coalition comments are available on the NCHPC website, www.nationalcoalitionhpc.org, under the tab "Advocacy—Introduction."

ⁱⁱⁱ The author acknowledges NASW member Elizabeth De La Ossa for her partnership in representing the Association to the Joint Commission Home Care PTAC.

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National Association of Social Workers. (2004). *NASW standards for palliative & end of life care*. Retrieved from www.socialworkers.org/practice/bereavement/standards/standards0504New.pdf

NASW Teleconferences & Webinars Addressing Palliative & Hospice Care

- *Cultural Competency in End-of-Life Care from a Faith-Based Perspective* (James Brooks, 2011)
- *Managing Professional Grief* (Elizabeth J. Clark, 2009)
- *The Myths of Grief* (Mary Raymer, 2008)
- *New Theory in Practice for Working with People Living with Grief* (Lorraine Hedtke, 2008)
- *Pain—An Introduction and an Opportunity for Social Work Involvement* (Terry Altilio, 2007)
- *Promoting Excellence in Pain Management and Palliative Care for Social Workers* (Shirley Otis-Green, 2010)
- *The Psychosocial Aspects of Working with Clients Who Have Life Threatening Illnesses* (Katherine Walsh, 2008)
- *Theoretical Foundations and Competencies in Hospice Care That Are Essential to Social Workers* (Cleo Lloyd & Sherri Weisenfluh, 2008)
- *Treating the Psychosocial Aspects of Pain Management* (Shirley Otis-Green, 2007)

Archived transcripts and audio recordings remain available online.

National Association of Social Workers. (2012). *Social work speaks: National Association of Social Workers policy statements 2012–2014*. Washington, DC: NASW Press.

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NASW Resources

Bereavement/End-of-Life Care practice page
www.socialworkers.org/practice/bereavement

Occupational Profile: Social Workers in Hospice and Palliative Care
<http://workforce.socialworkers.org/studies/profiles/Hospice.pdf>

Advanced Practice Specialty Credentials in Hospice and Palliative Social Work
www.socialworkers.org/credentials

Hope Conference (July 2012)
www.professionofhope.org

WEBINARS & TELECONFERENCES (available to NASW members)

- **NASW Lunchtime Series:**
www.socialworkers.org/ce/online/lunchtime
- **NASW Specialty Practice Sections:**
www.socialworkers.org/sections

Articles from *Encyclopedia of Social Work* (20th ed.)
(T. Mizrahi & L. E. Davis, Eds., 2008)
Available from NASW Press,
www.naswpress.org

- Hospice (Mary Raymer & Dona J. Reese)
- Pain (Terry Altilio)
- Palliative Care (Betty J. Kramer)

Help Starts Here consumer website
www.helpstarthere.org

National Social Worker Finder
www.helppro.com/nasw/BasicSearch.aspx

Center for Workforce Studies & Social Work Practice Recent Publications

Occupational Profiles: Available at

<http://workforce.socialworkers.org/studies/other.asp>

- *Social Work Salaries by Gender*
- *Social Work Salaries by Race/Ethnicity*
- *Social Workers in Colleges and Universities*
- *Social Workers in Government Agencies*
- *Social Workers in Health Clinics & Outpatient Health Care Settings*
- *Social Workers in Hospice and Palliative Care*
- *Social Workers in Hospitals and Medical Centers*
- *Social Workers in Mental Health Clinics & Outpatient Facilities*
- *Social Workers in Private Practice*
- *Social Workers in Psychiatric Hospitals*
- *Social Workers in Schools*
- *Social Workers in Social Service Agencies*

Social Work Practice Perspectives: Available at

www.socialworkers.org/practice/default.asp

- *2011 Medicare Changes for Clinical Social Workers*
- *Accountable Care Organizations (ACOs): Opportunities for the Social Work Profession*
- *Adolescent Depression and Suicide Risk: How Social Workers Can Make a Difference*
- *Advocating for Clinical Social Workers: Highlights of 2010*
- *Creativity and Aging*
- *Dangerous Rites of Passage: Trends in College Alcohol Consumption*
- *Domestic Violence and Human Trafficking: Double Jeopardy for Immigrant Women in the United States*
- *Domestic Violence and Women of Color: Complex Dynamics*
- *Engaging Young People in Their Transition Planning*
- *Healthy People 2020: Social Work Values in a Public Health Roadmap*

- *Opting Out of Medicare as a Clinical Social Worker*
- *Results of 2010 Psychotherapy Survey*
- *Support for Family Caregivers: The National Landscape and the Social Work Role*
- *Supporting the Child Welfare Workforce to Reduce Child Maltreatment*
- *The Medical Home Model: What Is It and How Do Social Workers Fit In?*

Leadership Ladders: Steps to a Great Career in Social Work

Available at <http://careers.socialworkers.org/professionaldev/default.asp>

- *From the Front Line to the Corner Office*
- *Letting Your Voice be Heard*
- *Managing Stress*
- *Navigating Large Service Systems*
- *Opening a New Private Practice*
- *Outside the Lines: Maximizing the Flexibility of a Social Work Degree*
- *Presenting Your Work to Others*
- *Publishing as a Practitioner*
- *Risk Management in Clinical Practice*
- *Strengthening Your Writing Skills: An Essential Task for Every Social Worker*
- *The Tech-Savvy Social Worker: Prepared for the Challenges of 21st Century Practice*
- *The Value of Dual Degrees*

New Practice Standards

For a complete list of practice standards, visit

www.socialworkers.org/practice/default.asp

- *NASW Standards for Social Work Practice with Family Caregivers of Older Adults (2010)*

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