



# HOSPICE & PALLIATIVE NURSES ASSOCIATION HOSPICE & PALLIATIVE CREDENTIALING CENTER

## Value Statement Hospice and Palliative Certification

### **Value Statement**

The Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association (HPNA), Hospice and Palliative Nurses Foundation (HPNF), and Hospice and Palliative Credentialing Center (HPCC):

- Support high-quality national certification in hospice and palliative care as validation of initial and continuing competence in the specialty.
- Champion hospice and palliative certification as an essential asset to the health system and the public as a symbol of high-quality care.
- Educate employers to support and recognize hospice and palliative certification for its benefits to patient care, workforce satisfaction, and institutional reputation.
- Promote hospice and palliative certification to other disciplines, associations, and stakeholders as the standard to transform the care and culture of serious illness.

### **Background**

The certification process validates an individual's mastery of a body of knowledge within the specialty of hospice and palliative care. Certification is an avenue to help ensure competent care and fulfill the shared vision of HPNA, HPNF, and HPCC: "Every person living with serious illness receives equitable, comprehensive, and innovative hospice and palliative care."

Patients, families, and health systems expect hospice and palliative professionals to practice in accordance with universal standards of care. Researchers and professional organizations have established nationally recognized hospice and palliative standards of care, including the National Consensus Project's *Clinical Practice Guidelines for Quality Palliative Care*.<sup>1</sup> These standards are reflected in the publication *Palliative Nursing: Scope and Standards of Practice*.<sup>2</sup> For nurses, certification fulfills a professional competency to demonstrate knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and skills consistent with palliative nursing professional standards, codes of ethics, and scope of practice.

In conjunction with emerging research and policy, hospice and palliative nursing education has continued to develop. Many academic nursing programs now incorporate palliative nursing concepts in their curricula.<sup>3,4</sup> However, academic degrees alone do not ensure specialty knowledge and expertise in palliative nursing. A survey of hospice and palliative nurses found that respondents sought additional education from professional organizations because they did not feel adequately prepared for roles in hospice and palliative care from their education and training.<sup>5</sup>



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Research into the value of palliative nursing certification and its correlation with patient and professional outcomes is needed.<sup>6,7</sup> In order to generalize research findings across specialties, the field needs a shared definition and criteria for certification.<sup>8-10,11</sup> There is evidence that specialty palliative care provided by interprofessional clinicians is associated with decreased symptom burden when compared to primary palliative care.<sup>7</sup> Specialty palliative care is defined as interventions provided by clinicians who are credentialed and have received specialized training in palliative care. Primary palliative care is defined as care at the generalist level.

For employers and healthcare systems, support and recognition of specialty certification remain mutually beneficial for the organization and staff.<sup>10</sup> For example, the Magnet Recognition Program, an accreditation body for hospitals that nurtures nursing excellence in the service of patient care, collects data on specialty certification of nursing staff. Hospitals that apply for Magnet status must supply numbers of specialty certified nursing staff, including all palliative nursing certifications.<sup>12</sup> A health system can publicly recognize staff who achieve higher levels of nursing education and certification. Specific measures to empower and promote certification include offering continuing education, payroll differentials, and paid time for certification review courses. Quality-improvement data show that professional certifications impact patient outcomes and workforce retention, both valued by healthcare organizations.<sup>10</sup>

## **Definition of Terms**

**Certification:** A voluntary, nongovernmental process by which an individual is determined by a certification body to have successfully completed the requirements of a certification program and may be identified to the public and other stakeholders as a certificant. Some regulatory bodies use voluntary certification programs to meet licensure or registration requirements.

### **The Hospice and Palliative Credentialing Center**

(<https://www.advancingexpertcare.org/hpcc/>) is the premier national credentialing organization that advances expert care in serious illness through state-of-the-art certification of continuing competency in hospice and palliative care and research.

**Continuing competence:** Continuing competence is the ongoing commitment of healthcare providers to integrate and apply knowledge, skills, and judgment with the attitudes, values, and beliefs required to practice safely, effectively, and ethically in a designated role and setting.<sup>11</sup>

**Maintenance of certification:** This is accomplished by a variety of mechanisms, including demonstration of continuing competence through self-assessment, continuing education, professional development activities, ongoing clinical practice, and, occasionally, re-examination.

**Recertification:** Recertification is the renewal of certification based on specified requirements (typically associated with continuing competence) completed within defined intervals.



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This statement reflects the best available evidence at the time of writing or revisions.

Approved by the HPNA and HPCC Boards of Directors June 2023

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