



Clinical Practice Guidelines for Quality Palliative Care, 4th Edition

Key Messages

The purpose of the National Consensus Project's *Clinical Practice Guidelines for Quality Palliative Care, 4th edition (NCP Guidelines)* is to improve access to quality palliative care for all people living with serious illness regardless of their diagnosis, prognosis, age or where they live or receive care.

The NCP Guidelines:

- foster consistent standards and criteria and encourage continuity of palliative care across settings,
- feature recommendations for integrating palliative care principles and best practices for all clinicians, and
- focus on specific clinical and organizational strategies, including treatment considerations and screening and assessment elements, facilitated by practice examples, tools and resources.

Health care organizations can choose how to best apply the guidelines criteria based on their patient populations and care settings with assistance from numerous available resources.

Palliative care can be provided throughout the community wherever people living with serious illness receive care, including at outpatient clinics, long-term care facilities, office practices, cancer centers, homeless shelters, dialysis units, prisons and in the home.

The NCP Guidelines can be used to:

- transform the care of individual patients and families as well as populations,
- design new palliative care programs,
- develop and refine educational programs,
- measure the effectiveness of and improve care,
- develop payer contracts,
- shape research, and
- prepare for health care accreditation.

The fourth edition of the NCP Guidelines expands on the information provided in the eight areas (domains) of palliative care identified in the previous editions.

The eight domains of the NCP Guidelines include:

1. Structure and Processes of Care
2. Physical Aspects of Care
3. Psychological and Psychiatric Aspects of Care
4. Social Aspects of Care
5. Spiritual, Religious and Existential Aspects of Care
6. Cultural Aspects of Care
7. Care of People Nearing the End of Life
8. Ethical and Legal Aspects of Care

Notable updates include information and emphasis on the importance of:

- a **comprehensive assessment** of each person living with serious illness, including their needs and priority goals;
- assessment of **families' and caregivers' needs** for support and education;
- **coordination and transitions of care**, especially as the person living with serious illness transitions from one place of care to another;
- **culturally inclusive care**, specifically the need for all health care professionals to practice culturally respectful care; and
- **communication among all stakeholders**, including the palliative care team, the person living with serious illness and the family and other health care professionals and providers of community resources.

The NCP Guidelines are available for no-cost download or print copy purchase at www.nationalcoalitionhpc.org/ncp. Discounts for bulk order purchases are available.

The NCP Guidelines were:

- developed by the National Consensus Project for Quality Palliative Care, comprised of [16 national organizations](#) with extensive expertise in and experience with palliative care and hospice,
- published by the [National Coalition for Hospice and Palliative Care](#), and
- endorsed by over [80 national organizations](#).

A systematic review of the research evidence was completed for the 4th edition by the RAND Evidence-based Practice Center. The complete findings are published in the [Journal of Pain and Symptom Management](#).