



Blue Shield of California's Palliative Care Program: Improving care for the seriously ill

A Serious Problem

Today, more than 90 million Americans live with serious illness, and that number is expected to double in the next 25 years.¹ People living with serious illness can be young or old; they can live for many years after initial diagnosis or be near the end of life, and will likely require extensive care from their families or other caregivers.

That's why Blue Shield of California provides its members and their caregivers access to comprehensive palliative care programs, and ensures those who are seriously ill are connected to case managers trained to help them understand their care options.

What is Palliative Care?

Palliative Care is patient- and family-centered care that prioritizes quality of life and seeks to ease the symptoms of serious illness. It is appropriate at any age and at any stage in a serious illness and can be provided along with curative treatment. It addresses the physical, intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual needs of seriously ill patients and their families. Studies show that palliative care enhances patient and family satisfaction, improves medication management² and reduces unnecessary hospitalizations and emergency room visits³.

Palliative care is covered as a standard medical service offered to all members with primary coverage from Blue Shield of California. Starting this year, it is also available for Medi-Cal beneficiaries enrolled with Care1st Health Plan, an affiliate of Blue Shield.

Blue Shield's Palliative Care Innovations

After the successful launch of a home-based palliative care pilot program in January 2017, Blue Shield expanded the program to enable our members to access these services wherever they live. Blue Shield built this statewide network of home-based palliative care providers through collaborative partnerships with our provider groups and Accountable Care Organizations (ACO), offering a broad network of facility-based and home-based palliative care providers throughout the state. Blue Shield of California is the only health plan offering its members home-based palliative care in all 58 counties in California.

Fast Facts



More than **90 million Americans** live with serious illness. This number is likely to double by 2040.¹

Home-based palliative care features home visits and **24/7 access to care.**



Palliative care can **reduce unnecessary ER visits** and hospitalizations.²



Blue Shield's home-based palliative care **patient satisfaction score.**



of our members enrolled in palliative care who passed away did so at home, **according to their wishes.**

Sources: ¹Center to Advance Palliative Care
²Journal of Palliative Medicine

This model of care features home visits from integrated teams that include physicians, nurses, social workers, chaplains, home health aides and other specialists to form a comprehensive care team and support system for patients facing serious illness. Blue Shield members receiving home-based palliative care benefit from an array of services delivered at home, including:

- Care management and coordination
- Pain and symptom management
- Assistance with treatment decisions and care planning
- Meal delivery and transportation in certain cases
- 24/7 access to care and support

Year-One Results

We're committed to creating a healthcare system that is worthy of our family and friends – and sustainably affordable. Our expanded palliative care program moves us closer to achieving our mission. Here are some of the program's results after its first year:

- More than 800 members – as well as their families and caregivers – received home-based palliative care services through Blue Shield in 2017
- Blue Shield's home-based palliative care programs received an average patient and family satisfaction score of 96 percent
- 90 percent of Blue Shield of California members enrolled in palliative care who have passed away did so in accordance with their wishes to be in their homes at the end of life. A [2012 study](#) found 70 percent of Californians would prefer to remain in their homes; however, only 32 percent of all Californians passed away at home⁴
- Blue Shield members referred to palliative care were more than twice as likely to utilize their hospice benefits when compared to the national average
- Blue Shield trains its nurse case managers to help seriously ill patients and their families understand and explore their care options
- Blue Shield of California helps its network primary care providers better serve their seriously ill patients by offering tools and resources on palliative care

For more information about Blue Shield of California's palliative care programs, please visit www.blueshieldca.com/palliativecare.

Blue Shield of California and Care1st Health Plan are independent licensees of the Blue Shield Association.

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2. Setter, S. M., Corbett, C. F., Neumiller, J. J., Gates, B. J., Sclar, D. A., Sonnett, T. E. (2009). Effectiveness of a pharmacist-nurse intervention on resolving medication discrepancies for patients transitioning from hospital to home health care. *American Journal of Health-System Pharmacy*, 66(22), 2027-2031.
3. Lustbader Dana, Mudra Mitchell, Romano Carole, Lukoski Ed, Chang Andy, Mittelberger James, Scherr Terry, and Cooper David. *Journal of Palliative Medicine*. Jan 2017.23-28.
4. Lake Research Partners, Coalition for Compassionate Care of California. (2012). Final Chapter: Californians' Attitudes and Experiences with Death and Dying. California Health Care Foundation.