

Executive Summary

Palliative care is comprehensive, interdisciplinary care for patients living with serious, potentially life-threatening or life-limiting conditions, with the goal of improving quality of life for both the patient and family. This approach to care prevents and relieves suffering through the early identification, assessment and treatment of pain and other problems, whether physical, psychosocial or spiritual. Palliative care is delivered based on needs, not prognosis. It is appropriate at any age or any stage of an illness and can be delivered along with curative treatment.

The Palliative Care and Quality of Life Interdisciplinary Advisory Council was established by legislation in 2018 to:

- Make recommendations to and advise KDHE on the establishment, maintenance, operation, and outcomes evaluation of palliative care initiatives in the state
- Maximize effectiveness of the State Palliative Care Consumer and Professional Information and Education Program
 - The program serves to ensure availability of comprehensive and accurate information and education about palliative care for all Kansans.

At present, availability and delivery of quality palliative care in the state of Kansas is lacking. According to the Center to Advance Palliative Care (CAPC) and the National Palliative Care Research Center (NPCRC), Kansas' access to palliative care currently ranks last in our region and 42 of 51 states and the District of Columbia. Data from 2021 Kansas Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System showed that only 3.6% of adult Kansans had received palliative care. To improve the provision of palliative care within Kansas, the council has identified the following four areas of priority:

- Access
- Education and Health Care Workforce Training
- Public and Community Awareness
- Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Planning

Key Takeaways to Improve the Care of Kansans with Serious, Potentially Life-threatening or Life-limiting Conditions.

1. Expansion of broadband access and preservation of policy changes for delivery of telehealth services are essential in order to achieve access to timely palliative care for all Kansans, including those in rural and frontier communities.
2. Incentive programs to recruit, train and retain highly skilled palliative care clinicians, education on primary palliative care for all disciplines, and enhanced support for unpaid caregivers are crucial in order to address our State's palliative care workforce shortage.
3. Efforts to engage and inform Kansans about palliative care are necessary in order to improve the general public's understanding and acceptance of palliative care, especially its differentiation from hospice.
4. Efforts to bring advance care planning and serious illness care planning to scale across care settings are necessary, so that Kansans are well informed and can express their wishes, values and treatment preferences.