

Hospice Visits

Experiential Learning Opportunities for Front Line Staff Members

Quality Palliative Care in Long Term Care Alliance (QPC-LTC)



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For more information regarding the project please visit www.palliativealliance.ca or email our team at palliativealliance@lakeheadu.ca

Introduction

Why is Palliative Care Education Important?

Although long term care homes provide palliative and end-of-life care many do not have formalized palliative care programs. The Long Term Care Act now requires that staff who provide direct hands on care to residents receive palliative care education on admission and yearly. The Hospice Visit education tool was created to help long term care homes provide this ongoing education but to also provide an experiential learning option to provide palliative care.

What are the Benefits of Experiential Learning?

Hospice Visits provide an experiential learning opportunity. This style of learning offers an alternative to the traditional in-service education model. Evidence suggests that traditional classroom style education does not address the varied learning styles of front-line staff. Traditional didactic learning does not lead to change of practice and does not follow what is known about adult learning principles (Fitzpatrick & Roberts, 2004) Role modeling hospice staff allows staff from long term care the opportunity to learn from organizations and formal caregivers that specialize in palliative and end-of-life care. Long term care staff members can learn best practices in palliative and end-of-life care, examine the organizational culture of an organization specializing in palliative care, and observe the importance of interprofessional team work at end-of-life. Front line staff indicated a sense of empowerment by participating in a hospice visit. Participants acquired new knowledge and resources on palliative and end-of-life care. Participants stated the Hospice experience validated the importance of their role in providing palliative and end of life care.

What is a Hospice Visit?

A hospice visit is where a staff member from a long term home visits and shadows staff at a hospice for a period of time. They are to work alongside and possibly provide care together with the hospice staff. It is important that when the staff member returns to the long term care home that they be met by a staff member, possibly their supervisor who inquires into their learning and asks how to support their application of their new knowledge and skills. One way is to be made a “champion” for palliative care and participate on the homes palliative care team.

Goals of Hospice Visits

Hospice Visits provides...

- an experiential learning opportunity, which is preferable to the common in-service model of education occurring in LTCHs. An experiential approach to learning is favored over the in-service model which is documented to be inconsistent with adult learning principles and as such, does not lead to sustainable change in practice.
- positive role modeling of best practices in providing palliative care. Front line staff are able to observe, discuss and directly apply best practices in a setting that specializes in providing optimal palliative and end-of-life care.
- empowerment, in that the PSW functions and is recognized as integral and valued member of the interprofessional team in providing palliative care.

Types of Hospices

Hospice palliative care services are fairly flexible services and depending on the institution they may differ in their delivery of care (Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association, 2008). According to the Canadian Hospice Association hospice palliative care offers the following services and supports: "Expert medical care to minimize pain and other symptoms, planning with loved ones for a team approach to care, emotional support with hospice volunteers, spiritual support for people of all faiths and beliefs, coordination of at-home nursing care , arrangement of homemaking and physical supports, respite care to give at-home caregivers a break, sympathetic listeners who are not afraid to hear about dying, ongoing bereavement support after the death of a loved one" (2008).

Types Hospice Palliative Care:

1. **Hospitals** - Some hospitals have rooms dedicated to patients requiring palliative care services
2. **Residential or Free Standing Hospices**—home like environments that provide inpatient palliative care services
3. **Ambulatory clinics**— Clinics that provide palliative care services through outpatient programs
4. **Long term care homes**— some long term care homes have specialized units for residents requiring palliative services however long term care homes are becoming more and more the last 'home' of residents before they die

How to Organize Hospice Visits for Your LTC Home

1. Building a Relationship with a Community Hospice

It is important to create a strong relationship with your community hospice in order for this initiative to be successful. As discussed earlier there are several different types of hospices however it does not matter which type of hospice is selected to run this exercise. For the pilot of this initiative a free standing and hospital based hospice were used. Begin with talking to the Executive Director about the initiative. You may then be directed to the Social Worker or other member of the interprofessional team to carry out the delivery of the education

Tip: To find your local hospice or to gather more information consider using the following website:

Canadian Virtual Hospice

http://www.virtualhospice.ca/en_US/Main+Site+Navigation/Home/Support/Resources/Programs+and+Services.aspx

2. Creating an Agreement

It is important before starting the initiative to have an informal agreement with the hospice. The following items should be considered:

- How many staff will go through the training each year?
- How many staff members will attending the training at a time?
- Will the training take place over one day or multiple days?
- Who will be the staff member's main contact at the hospice unit?
- What are the main activities the LTC staff member will participate in (eg. Interprofessional team meetings or rounds, client care conference, etc)?
- How will the day or days setup? Will the LTC staff member stay with the main contact person or will he or she shadow several staff from each department?
- How should the LTC staff member be dressed?
- Will the LTC staff member need to sign a confidentiality form?

3. Creating an Hospice Visit Education Timeline

Creating a education timeline can be beneficial for both you and the hospice unit. This timeline can allow your organizations to prepare for the resources needed to make the days a success. When making your timeline consider:

- Will the LTC staff member be paid for doing this education?
- How many staff will attend?
- Will you need replacement staff?

The timeline will also help you determine how many staff members should be selected to participate in this event.

4. Staff Selection Process

All staff members can benefit by visiting a hospice unit. It is important to select staff in the LTC home who want to participate as well as will be willing to share the informed learned with other staff members. It is important to determine your staff selection process prior to advertising the event. When completing the pilot project, the LTC homes felt a call for participants were helpful to determine which staff would be participating in the educational activity. If your home has a palliative care team consider providing the team with the first option of attending.

***Tip:** Tracking staff who have participate in the hospice visit is not only beneficial to inform Compliance Officers of who has completed this form of palliative care education but it also ensures that a staff member does not participate twice or misses out on the opportunity to attend.*

5. Advertising

It is important to ensure that this education is advertised in an accessible way for all staff. Consider the following methods when advertising your event:

- Email
- Flyers ([see Appendix A](#))
- Newsletter Submissions ([see Appendix B](#))
- Staff Meetings
- Palliative Care Information Boards
- Word of Mouth through the palliative care team

6. Preparing Staff for a Hospice Visit

Once your staff selections have been made it is important to provide staff with information on what to expect. Having a handout can be an efficient way of providing the staff with the information they will need. Items you may consider including are:

- Date(s) and time of visit
- Location of hospice
- Sample agenda
- What to expect
- Contact person at the hospice
- What to wear when participating in the visit

Tip: You may want to consider having staff write 3 questions they have prior to attending the hospice visit and forwarding this to the facilitator. This way the facilitator can make sure the questions are answered throughout the visit.

See [Appendix C](#) for an example information letter. You may also consider including a name of a mentor (if person consent) that has already participated in the hospice visit. This could increase dissemination about the educational event but it also encourages peer to peer guidance. This mentor can provide staff with an idea of what to expect and tips on how to make the day a success.

7. Following up & consider mentorship opportunities

It is important to follow-up with staff after the visit. Validate that it is important for the staff member to bring knowledge learned back to the home and brainstorm ideas on how to do that with the staff member. For example this staff member could help facilitate a huddle to inform other staff of a new tool or resource. By having these staff mentor you are continuing education long after the hospice visit. See appendix D for types of questions you may want to ask staff who have completed a hospice visit.

Appendix A: Promotional Flyer

Quality Palliative Care in Long Term Care

A Community-University Research Alliance

Call for PSWs Interested in Palliative Care Training

The Quality Palliative Care Research Project invites **PSWs interested in receiving Palliative Care training** at Carpenter hospice to submit an application to

What is involved?

- Shadow and work alongside hospice staff for two days
- Completion of a short post-training questionnaire
- Participants are compensated by the project for their time
- Share learning experience with coworkers and attend Comfort Rounds when possible.

Learn new ways to approach work and understand what it means to deliver high quality palliative care.

If you have any questions feel free to contact the following staff who have already participated in this training:

Interested applicants will be scheduled as is possible.



Appendix B: Newsletter Sample



Call for PSW Volunteers

The Palliative Care Research Project invites PSWs interested in receiving Palliative Care training at a local hospice to submit an application to _____.

What is involved?

- Shadow and work alongside hospice staff for two days
- Completion of a short post-training questionnaire
- Participants are compensated for their time

Learn new ways to approach work and understand what it means to deliver high quality palliative care.

Interested applicants will be scheduled as is possible.

Appendix C: Sample Information Letter

Quality Palliative Care in Long Term Care A Community-University Research Alliance

LTC staff visits to HOSPICE NAME

Congratulations on being selected to attend the *HOSPICE NAME* and participate in this job shadow experience.

A few things you should know.

1. HOSPICE NAME is a community partner for the project and has committed to welcoming LTC staff members to shadow Hospice staff. We are hoping that this will enable learning through doing.
2. LTC NAME is paying for your time to attend a two day shadowing experience. We will expect that you will complete a reflection questionnaire as well as inform your colleagues of information you have learned during your visit.
3. You will be visiting the HOSPICE NAME for TIME PERIOD from 7:30am to 3:30pm.
4. NAME of Hospice Work and Position at NAME OF HOSPICE is our contact person. She can be reached at PHONE NUMBER.
5. The hospice is located at ADDRESS
6. While visiting the hospice you are require to wear LIST DRESS REQUIREMENTS.

Enjoy your visit!

Appendix D: Follow Up Questions

Please help us understand your hospices' perspective of the job shadow program by answering these questions:

- Do you think the PSW job shadow program benefitted your hospice patients, families or staff? In what way was there a benefit seen?
- What is the ideal time frame for job shadow placements? 2 days? 3 days? Longer?
- What information would you most want to share with job shadow participants?
- Would you recommend the job shadow program to other hospices? What benefits would you describe to them?
- What type of feedback have you received from your staff, patients or families about the job shadow participants?
- Were there any challenges or difficult aspects to the job shadowing experience?
- Are there any changes to the program that you would recommend?
- What did job shadow participants seem the most surprised about? Were there hospice situations that they were not comfortable with?
- What have you learned about LTC palliative care as a result of information shared by the program participants?
- How do you think the participants benefitted from the job shadow program?

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