

Palliative Care & Hospice Education and Training Act

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Background

Palliative care improves quality of life, enhances patient and family satisfaction with care, and controls costs for the rapidly expanding population of individuals with serious illness or multiple chronic conditions. In 2001, just 7% of U.S. hospitals with 50+ beds had a palliative care program, compared with 72% in 2019. Yet, not all these programs have in place the interdisciplinary team necessary to provide comprehensive, high-quality palliative care. At the same time, palliative care is increasingly being provided in community settings. This growth comes in response to the growing number and needs of Americans living with serious or complex chronic illnesses and the realities of the care responsibilities faced by their families. More must be done to ensure patients and providers understand the benefits of palliative care and to build a healthcare workforce aligned with the nation's evolving healthcare needs. The Palliative Care and Hospice Education and Training Act (PCHETA) will help ensure an adequate, appropriately trained workforce is available to provide pain and symptom management, intensive communication, and care coordination that addresses the episodic and long-term nature of serious and complex chronic illness.

Bill Summary

EDUCATION – Establishes Palliative Care and Hospice Education Programs to support the training of interdisciplinary health professionals, including physicians, nurses, social workers, physician assistants, chaplains, and others in palliative care; support the training and retraining of faculty, including to integrate palliative and hospice care into primary and specialty care practices; and provide students with clinical training in appropriate sites of care.

- **PHYSICIAN TRAINING** – Authorizes grants or contracts to schools of medicine, teaching hospitals, and graduate medical education programs to train physicians who plan to teach or practice palliative medicine. Such programs will provide training in palliative medicine through a variety of service rotations, such as consultation services, acute care services, extended care facilities, ambulatory care and comprehensive evaluation units, hospice, home health, and community care programs.
- **ACADEMIC CAREER AWARDS** – Promotes the career development of physicians, nurses, social workers, physician assistants, chaplains, or other disciplines identified by the Secretary. Eligible individuals must be board certified or board eligible in Hospice and Palliative Medicine or have completed specialty training in palliative and hospice care and have a junior (nontenured) faculty appointment at an accredited school of medicine. Eligible individuals must provide assurance of a full-time faculty appointment in a health professions institution and commit to spend a majority of their funded time teaching and developing skills in interdisciplinary education in palliative care.
- **WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT** – Supports palliative care workforce development through fellowship programs providing short-term intensive courses focused on palliative care. The fellowships will reinforce the team-based approach to palliative care by providing supplemental training for faculty members in medical schools, nursing schools, or education programs in psychology, pharmacy, social work, physician assistant, chaplaincy, or other health disciplines approved by the Secretary. Such fellowships can upgrade the knowledge and skills of health professionals and improve the care of individuals with serious or life-threatening illnesses, as well as enhance such professionals' interdisciplinary teaching skills.
- **CAREER INCENTIVE AWARDS** – Authorizes institutions to provide awards to physicians, advanced practice nurses, social workers, physician assistants, psychologists, chaplains, pharmacists, and other health professionals approved by the Secretary who agree to teach or practice in the field of palliative care for at least 5 years.
- **NURSE TRAINING** – Amends existing nurse education programs to include hospice and palliative nursing as a priority area, and provides grants for nursing schools and other eligible entities to develop and implement programs and initiatives to train and educate individuals in providing palliative care in health-related educational, hospital, hospice, home, or long-term care settings.

AWARENESS – Provides the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality with authority to disseminate information to patients, families, and health professionals about the benefits of palliative care and the services that are available to support patients with serious or life-threatening illnesses. The dissemination of such information, resources, and materials about palliative care services must be issued to health professionals and the public in a variety of formats, in consultation with professional and patient stakeholders.

RESEARCH – Directs the Department of Health and Human Services to use existing authorities and funds to expand palliative care research to advance clinical practice and improve care delivery for patients with a serious or life-threatening illness.
