

## **Palliative Care Advisory Council**

**August 1, 2025 | 9:30-10:30am**

### **Meeting Minutes**

**Members present:** Melanie Cama, Barbara Cass, Sister Catherine Mary, Taryn Hamre, Jennifer Kapo, Karen Mulvihill, Nikki Neifeld, William Nolan, Natalie Shurtleff, Charles Williams, Tracy Wodatch.

**Members absent:** ToniAnn Marchone, Kerry Moss.

#### **Introduction**

- Karen called the meeting to order at 9:33am.
- Tracy motioned to approve the minutes from June 6, 2025, and Barbara Cass seconded. The minutes passed without discussion.

#### **Palliative Care Appointments**

- Barbara Cass shared that the four legislative appointments to the council are at DPH and will be signed shortly.
- Barbara also shared that Governor's Office has agreed to reach out to the two appointees. Melanie Cama confirmed that she received a packet from the Governor's office and discussed what the application entailed.

#### **Discussion: Access to Analgesics/Fentanyl**

- Barbara raised concerns about potential challenges accessing fentanyl for patients based on a situation with a New York provider transitioning a patient to care in Connecticut and wanted to solicit from the group if any practitioners have been having trouble accessing fentanyl in their work.
- Group members shared that they have not experienced difficulty with access or fentanyl shortages, but that they will reach out to their networks to confirm.

#### **MOLST Update**

- Barbara Cass updated the group on the progress of the MOLST Advisory Council. The group has modernized the form and training, which are currently under review at DPH. Barbara is hoping for a rollout of the changes this fall.

- Mary Kate Eanniello asked if eligible providers who have been trained previously will still be able to discuss and sign MOLSTs, or if they will be required to retrain in order to retain their eligible provider status.
  - Barbara Cass let Mary Kate know that the old MOLST forms will still be valid, and providers should still be allowed to write MOLSTs since the principles will not be changing, but it is important that providers know about the changes, especially with the removal of the witness signature requirement. Barbara Cass will take this information back to the MOLST advisory council and consider adding the answer to this question to a frequently asked questions document.
- Tracy brought up modernizing the DNR process and offered to give feedback on modernizing regulations and education. Barbara indicated that modernizing these regulations are on the list but are not currently high priority. Members also shared issues that they have been having in interactions with EMS personnel and patients with a DNR.

## **Committee Updates**

### *Pediatric Palliative Care Subcommittee*

- Tracy Wodatch reported that ToniAnn Marchone and Kerry Moss are planning on regrouping and starting meetings in September.
- She also shared that Connecticut Hospice is getting started on getting access to pediatric hospice care, and they are seeking a pediatrician to oversee the program.
- TJ Hamre updated the group on the Connecticut Pediatric Palliative Care Coalition
  - Eileen O'Shea hosted a conference in June focused on advanced communication skills in pediatric serious illness.
  - Members who attended the conferences shared that the event was very moving and educational.

### *Infusion Subcommittee*

- Karen Mulvihill did not have additional updates, the access to IV medication issue is still present
- She would like to get Rod Mariott, the director of drug control at DCP to speak to the Council in the fall. Barbara offered to help facilitate this connection.
- Tracy will also reach out to the hospice providers to see what their current practices are. It is her understanding that IV medications are not the first go-to for managing pain.

## **Long-Term Project**

- Karen would like to conduct a needs assessment of the facilities, to understand what their perceptions are around education for palliative care. Reaching this population has been challenging.
- The group discussed reaching out to Matt Barrett and Mag Morelli to reach their organizations' membership, acknowledging that the response rate will likely be around 25%.
- Barbara spoke about the desire in consumers to learn about the differences between hospice and palliative care.
- Tracy emphasized the importance of including a description as to why the group is gathering this information.

## **General Discussion**

- Barbara asked Karen Mulvihill about follow-up with the discussion from last meeting about adding a question about palliative care to the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS). This could be an avenue to ask the public about palliative care and advance care planning.
  - Barbara will reach out to Adora at DPH to see if the group can look into the questions that other states may be asking about palliative care. Eugene Rusyn will also check with his team on any research they can do and circle back.

## **Closing**

- Karen motioned to adjourn the meeting and Sister Catherine Mary seconded.
- The next meeting is scheduled for September 5, 2025.