

# **Montgomery County Palliative Care and End of Life Coalition: Addressing Quality of Life When Serious Illness Occurs**

## **Purpose**

The Montgomery County Palliative Care and End of Life Coalition (The Coalition) is the County's only public-private collaborative working to ensure that individuals and caregivers facing serious illness have team-based, health and social service care that supports their goals, values, and preferences at all stages of life and in all steps of their illness.

The mission of the Coalition is to promote the provision of integrated and coordinated Montgomery County programs, practices and policies for those with serious illness and their caregivers through education, advocacy and sharing of information.

## **Stakeholders**

The Coalition is coordinated by the County and represents perspectives along the continuum of care for individuals and families facing serious and advanced illness; from diagnosis through treatment and at end of life. Stakeholders include representatives from public, private and non-profit medical, legal and social service organizations as well as patients, caregivers and volunteer community members.

Coalition members share a commitment to support County residents navigating a serious or advanced illness. Specific input from the following help guide the work of the Coalition: Health care providers, psycho-social services, faith/spiritual leaders, care coordinators, community education and credit-earning Professional Education organizations, advance care/estate planning legal services, caregiver (family, volunteer and/or paid), health care insurers, funders, and policy makers.

## **Membership**

Coalition membership is open. Interested parties can sign up on the Coalition's website ([www.mccelc.org](http://www.mccelc.org)).

The work of the Coalition is led by a Leadership Team. The Leadership Team includes two Co-Chairs as well as representatives from stakeholder groups, above. One of the Co-Chairs is the County Department of Health and Human Services Area Agency on Aging representative. The remaining members of Leadership Team are elected for two year terms at the annual meeting of the Coalition. The annual meeting is held in September of each year. Half of the Leadership Team will be elected each year. Any member who is present at the annual meeting can vote. A simple majority of votes ratifies the election of the Leadership Team. The Co-Chairs facilitate the nomination process and consult with Coalition members to develop a slate of candidates.

## ***Responsibility***

The Coalition holds itself responsible for raising awareness of issues affecting County residents, their families and caregivers facing serious and advanced illness. This includes challenges and opportunities for direct services as well as policy and partnerships. While the scope of work focuses on Montgomery County, Coalition members are actively involved in state, regional and federal efforts related to palliative care and end of life.

Coalition members commit themselves to fostering best practices, reducing duplication of services, encouraging partnerships and collaborations, and addressing gaps and needs in access to palliative care and end of life services. Members agree to attend at least half of the Coalition meetings, in-person or by phone, and to serve on at least one of the Coalition Workgroups. Current workgroups include: Information and Education, Advance Care Planning, and Community Based Palliative Care. Members agree to help advance the goals of the Coalition through their own expertise as well as access to their professional and community networks, as possible.

The Coalition creates and disseminates factsheets, issue briefs, media messages and other materials highlighting the status of resources and practices within the County related to palliative care and end of life. The Leadership Team is primarily responsible for developing these resources. Members commit to providing input on content and to disseminate materials on their individual websites, newsletters and other outlets, as possible.

Success is measured via meeting evaluations, requests for information, website traffic and periodic surveys to the full membership. Community-wide data relating to palliative care and end of life will also be assessed, as available (i.e. 30-day hospital readmission rates, Advance Care Planning documentation, home health and hospice utilization for those with serious and advanced illness, growth in professionals entering/specializing in palliative care/end-of-life). Data from these assessments will be reviewed by the Leadership Team and any action items presented to the full membership.

## ***Decision Making***

The Coalition is a collaborative body. Input from the full membership is essential in determining the scope of work for the Coalition. The Leadership Team incorporates full member input into the development of overall strategy, priorities and annual goals. Drafts of each of these documents are presented at Coalition meetings so final member input can be solicited. A simple majority of members present at the meeting ratifies Coalition decisions when needed.

Coalition members serve on at least one Committee. Committees develop and implement annual workplans in consultation with the full Coalition.

The Co-Chairs set the Coalition meeting agendas, facilitate meetings and work between meetings to further the goals of the Coalition. Between meetings, the Co-Chairs consult the Leadership Team as needed and bring new items to the full Coalition whenever possible. The Leadership Team has the authority to represent the Coalition to the public and to potential partners, as needed.

## **Communication**

The Coalition maintains a website with information on meeting dates and times, members, membership enrollment, contact information and palliative care and end of life resources and information. The Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services Area Agency on Aging is responsible for the website. In addition to providing content, Coalition members agree to add a link to the Coalition page from their organizational website, as possible.

The Coalition meeting dates are set in advance. Meeting reminders are emailed to all members at least two days prior. Reminders include the agenda and related background information.

Periodic “e-blasts” are also sent to members and other community stakeholders that highlight key information, efforts, opportunities and challenges related to palliative care and end of life matters.

## **Resources**

The success of the Coalition depends on consistent and active involvement by members and a willingness to lend their expertise to the work of the Coalition as needed. This includes members who have the authority to represent their organizations, agencies or departments.

At this time membership to the Coalition is free. The County Department of Health and Human Services Area Agency on Aging provides limited staff support for the Coalition. From time to time the Coalition may seek additional resources to support its work. Since the Coalition falls under the auspices of the local government, it may identify a fiscal sponsor, as needed, to meet application or contractual requirements. Selection of a fiscal sponsor would be presented to the Coalition for a vote.