

**Development of an Evidence-Based Certification Program for Advanced Palliative and Hospice Social Workers (APHSW-C)**

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**A nation-wide survey validates the role of the advanced hospice and palliative social worker and provides the foundation for an evidence-based certification program.**

**Background:**

- The role of the hospice and palliative social worker has not previously been validated via research.
- A role delineation study is essential to the development of a certification program.
- Palliative physicians, nurses and chaplains have certification programs in place.
- The Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation funded the role delineation study and development of a social work certification program.

**Research Objectives:**

- To define the role of the advanced hospice and palliative social worker based upon the tasks and skills required for practice.
- To develop an evidence-based certification program for hospice and palliative social workers.

**Methods:**

- An Advisory Committee was formed to develop a survey of hospice and palliative social workers.
- An experienced testing and certification company and an expert consultant were secured to help with the process.
- Survey was completed by social workers recruited from across the nation.
- Results were analyzed.
- Criteria for certification was defined.
- Content experts were recruited to write and evaluate items to be included in a certification exam.
- Exam was administered at testing sites during two testing cycles.

**Results:**

- 482 social workers representing 46 states responded to the survey which included demographic questions and ranking of 152 tasks and their importance to the position.
- Tasks were organized into four broad categories: assessment and re-evaluation; planning and intervention; death, grief and bereavement; and professionalism.
- Content experts developed two forms of an exam. Items were evaluated several times before inclusion.
- 420 candidates took the exam in 2019; 351 met criteria and became certified.

**Conclusion:**

- The role of the advanced hospice and palliative social worker includes specialized skills and knowledge.
- Social workers now join their colleagues in palliative and hospice medicine, nursing and chaplaincy in having an evidence-based certification program.



Advanced Palliative Hospice Social Worker Certified



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**Practitioner Definition Used For Role Analysis:**

*A hospice and palliative care social worker provides psychosocial assessment and services to the patient/family/caregivers, facilitates patient-centered goal-setting and a plan of care. This social worker provides counseling and casework to meet the identified goals, and assists with decision-making and advance care planning throughout the trajectory of serious illness. A hospice and palliative care social worker seeks to improve patient/family quality of life through education, addressing needs and referring clients to the appropriate resources.*

**Key Tasks Identified on Role Analysis Study:**

- Perform psychosocial assessment from a patient/family centered care perspective
- Assessment of the patient's current and desired quality of life
- Assessment of the patient's coping skills
- Assessment of the family/caregiver coping
- Identify support systems
- Provide emotional support
- Advocate for patient-centered care within interdisciplinary team
- Adhere to confidentiality requirements
- Maintain professional boundaries
- Collaborate with other professionals
- Identify and report abuse & neglect as mandated by law



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**2019 Exam Statistics**

	Jan./Feb. 2019	July/Aug. 2019	Totals
Met Criteria to Take Exam	188	232	420
Passed Exam	163	188	351
Pass Rate	86.7%	81%	N/A