



For Immediate Release
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Starting Jan. 1, 2018, new Medi-Cal Palliative Care benefit offers patient- and family-centered care for those facing end-of-life

FAIRFIELD – In the months near the end of life, what most people want is a last chance to be themselves, in their homes, with the people they love.

Palliative care is patient- and family-centered care that anticipates, prevents, and treats suffering during end of life. And beginning Jan. 1, 2018, palliative care becomes a covered benefit for all eligible Medi-Cal beneficiaries. The benefit gives individuals, during the period before hospice care is necessary, an alternative to spending time in hospitals and emergency rooms.

Partnership HealthPlan of California (PHC), the Medi-Cal managed care plan for 14 Northern California counties, is pleased that its community-based palliative care pilot program, which launched in September 2015, is becoming a full-fledged benefit.

“Our pilot efforts have shown that palliative care really works,” said Elizabeth Gibboney, CEO of PHC. “Members have been able to spend their final months as they wish, at home, with the medical support they need and the family support they want. We are glad to help our members access this invaluable care.”

In PHC’s *Partners in Palliative Care* pilot every \$1 spent to administer the pilot, \$3 were saved in hospital costs. From enrollment to death, 55 percent those participating in the pilot avoided hospitalization, compared to 21 percent of matched comparison beneficiaries.

ResolutionCare and Collabria Care, which participated in PHC’s pilot program, are now among those contracted with PHC to provide palliative care services to eligible members, and more contracted providers are being added. The care they give includes assessment, pain management, care coordination, access to caregiver support, and case management.

“Our living and dying are not medical. While it’s a natural truth that we all die, the last chapter of life is better centered in our homes and with our families,” said Dr. Michael Fratkin, president and founder of ResolutionCare, based in Humboldt County. “We are proud to be a participant in the

creation of palliative care capacity and access for all Partnership members, and Medi-Cal recipients across the state.”

“Palliative care increases the quality of life of all recipients, and this new benefit will increase access to this special care for thousands of patients,” said Linda Gibson, President & CEO, Collabria Care, based in Napa County. “Collabria Care looks forward to continuing their work with Partnership HealthPlan and offering community-based palliative care services to all eligible patients in our region.”

Collabria shared a palliative care success story involving a PHC member who took part in the pilot program. The Napa County woman, in her mid-50s, had end-stage liver disease. She was given information about her diagnosis and agreed to explore counseling. She was taught skills to be in control of her own health management. She began working with a volunteer to write her life story, and after seven months graduated from the palliative care program due to improved prognosis. She has had no ER visits or hospitalizations, has remained alcohol-free, and is enjoying her family.

Consistent with new state guidelines, PHC will offer palliative care to members with an expected survival of one year or less who have one of four diagnoses: advanced cancer, liver disease, congestive heart failure, or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

Some additional factors are considered in eligibility, but essentially the care is to be provided to PHC members who need more help at the end of life but who are not yet ready for hospice care. Members must be willing to have home-based care, participate in advanced care planning discussion, and avoid hospital care and ER visits.

PHC members or their family who want to learn more about the palliative care benefit can call the PHC Member Services team at (800) 863-4155 or TTY (800) 735-2929 or 711.

The following palliative care organizations are currently contracted with PHC and accepting patients. More are being added, so please contact PHC for an updated list:

- ResolutionCare – Del Norte, Humboldt, Lassen, Mendocino, Modoc, Shasta, Siskiyou, Trinity
- Collabria Care – Napa, Solano and Sonoma
- Yolo Hospice – Yolo
- Hospice Services of Lake County – Lake
- Medical Home Care Professionals – Shasta
- Continuum Hospice – Solano

About Partnership HealthPlan of California (PHC)

PHC is a nonprofit community-based health care organization that contracts with the state to administer Medi-Cal benefits. PHC provides quality health care to over 567,000 Medi-Cal members. Beginning in Solano County in 1994 PHC now provides services to 14 Northern California counties – Del Norte, Humboldt, Lake, Lassen, Marin, Mendocino, Modoc, Napa, Shasta, Siskiyou, Solano, Sonoma, Trinity, and Yolo.