

# The Secret to Successful Complex Care Management

Complex care management is frequently used to improve quality and reduce costs for the highest-need and highest-cost patients. Although the literature to date suggests that it has not yet had the hoped-for impact<sup>1</sup>, the promise of this approach is exemplified in cases where the outcomes are much more positive—savings of as much as \$12,000 per participant with top satisfaction ratings<sup>2</sup>.

What is the secret that results in this impact? Successful complex care management programs trained their care managers in **specific communication and assessment skills**. Building on the essential foundation of motivational interviewing skills, **complex care managers working with people with serious illness require these additional competencies:**

Care Management, Currently	Care Management, Improvements
→ Patient and family understand the disease and self-care	→ Patient and family understand their prognosis, what to expect, and what to do as disease progresses → Patient, family, and treating clinicians understand symptom burden and how to address
→ Clarify the treatment plan	→ Clarify the patient's values, goals, and preferences in the context of a realistic understanding of what to expect
→ Support treatment adherence	→ Work with the clinical team to align the treatment plan to the goals articulated by the patient/family
→ Assess for unmet psychosocial needs	→ Conduct skilled symptom assessment, including pain, anxiety, depression, constipation, fatigue, and weakness → Assess family caregiver burden and emotional and spiritual needs → Work with the care team to pre-emptively address symptoms and other needs to prevent crises
→ Transfer information across multiple providers	→ Communicate to achieve a coordinated and consistent approach among all providers, rooted in what the patient has said is most important to them as it evolves over time

**The Center to Advance Palliative Care (CAPC)** has created training resources for member organizations to equip care managers with these knowledge and skills essential to aligning care with patient goals and identifying and preventing the most common root causes of preventable utilization<sup>3</sup>. Award-winning online courses use adult learning principles and build on motivational interviewing techniques to train care managers in conversation skills on goals of care and best practices in symptom management, while supplemental materials provide best practice assessment tools and communication resources.

**“Our case managers are quite energized because they are learning things that truly make a difference with their challenging cases.”**

*– Training Manager, Blue Shield California*

<sup>1</sup> McWilliams et al., *Health Aff*, 2017, 36(12). <sup>2</sup> Krakauer et al., *Health Aff*, 2009, 28(5). <sup>3</sup> Nipp et al., *Cancer*, 2017, 123(23).