Palliative Care Link Nurse Program



Mallee Division

2009-2010

DRAFT V2

MDGP acknowledges the funding support from the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing for this program.

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1. Background

The term “Link Nurse” refers to nurses who are prepared to acts as links between specialist services and the staff/patients of the clinical areas where they work. The Link Nurse Program is provided with appropriate education and a formal means of two way communication with Specialist Palliative Care Services enabling them to fulfil the expectations of the role, which are; distribution of information to their colleagues, involvement in workplace policy and procedure development and the promotion of best practice palliative care. Link Nurses are **NOT** Specialist Palliative Care nurses but are nurses with a keen interest in palliative care.

Link Nurses have been used previously to promote the concept of, among other things, infection control, mental health nursing and palliative care.
The Link Nurse role is seen as a means of improving the quality of care delivered to patients through the development and education of the staff who provide 24 hour ongoing care at a direct level.

The Link Nurse role is particularly relevant to areas that are geographically isolated providing a means of ensuring the usually limited Specialist Palliative Care resources are deployed for those with complex issues or symptoms that are difficult to control, while facility staff are supported to manage the less complex aspects of palliative care.

It is expected that the Link Nurse Program in the Mallee Division will:-

a) Facilitate ongoing best practice palliative care in clinical settings
b) Provide an ongoing means of distributing palliative care updates to staff
c) Assist in initiating policy and procedural change in clinical settings
d) Allow for the collection of information that enables targeted education of health workers
e) Provide the opportunity for cross organisational communication and relationship building
f) Empower staff to advocate for patients in an informed manner
g) Promote the use of appropriate palliative care tools e.g. Advanced Care Directives
h) Provide a potential career pathway to the Specialist Palliative Care Nurse role
i) Assist the Specialist Palliative Care service to focus on the more complex, resource intensive patients

2. Role Descriptions

a) Link Nurse

The role description describes the Link Nurse role and how it is expected to be performed after education and training. It describes what the nurse is responsible for doing, how it is done, and how it relates to other positions within and outside their place of work. The role description is not intended to cover every kind of work the Link Nurse undertakes in their clinical area and only addresses the main focus of the Link Nurse role.

Link Nurse Role Description

a) Purpose of Position

The purpose of the Link Nurse role is to:

- Promote best practice palliative care through:- education, clinical policies/procedures and resource use
- Act as a liaison between the Specialist Palliative Care Nurses and staff/patients- but **NOT** to assume the role of a Specialist Palliative Care Nurse
- Provide informed input into policies and procedures governing the delivery of palliative care
- Act as a resource for other staff
- Identify topics for staff development

b) Key Activities

- Provides clinical leadership for other staff in their workplace in regard to palliative care
- Acts as a point of liaison with the Specialist Palliative Care (SPC)Nurses
- Promotes referral to SPC Nurses of patients with complex issues or symptoms that are difficult to control
- Assists to develop processes and systems that improve palliative care delivery in their clinical area
- Identifies palliative care training and education needs of staff and works with their Manager and the Program facilitator to enable that training to be provided
- Identifies palliative care system and process opportunities for improvement and raises these with relevant staff in their organisation
- Ensures that any clinical or educational activities provided within the clinical area reflect current issues, trends and research.
- Attends Link Nurse meetings and, where relevant, conveys information from the meetings back to their clinical area

c) Link Nurse Prerequisites

- Registered Nurse Division 1 in the State of Victoria or NSW and in possession of a current practicing certificate.
- Currently employed in a clinical area
- A strong interest in palliative care

b) Link Nurse Program Facilitator

The Link Nurse Program requires ongoing coordination of recruitment, meetings, education and review process. The facilitation role is undertaken by the Rural Palliative Care Project Officer

The Program Facilitator is responsible for:-

- Ongoing recruitment of Link Nurses
- Liaison with health facilities to highlight the Link Nurse Program
- Determining a schedule of meetings each calendar year
- Coordinating education sessions
- Regularly collating and distributing to Link Nurses a flyer containing a) palliative care education available b) any scholarships or grants available and c) relevant journal articles
- Gaining and acting on feedback from Link Nurses regarding the Program and palliative care issues
- Formally reviewing the Link Nurse Program

3. Recruitment and Selection

Link Nurses are to be recruited to the role via an expression of interest.

a) Recruitment

- Expression of interest document distributed to all health facilities e.g. hospitals, GP clinics, aged care facilities
- Date determined for responses to expression
- Responders are to complete an application form provided

b) Selection

The number of Link Nurse places is limited to 20, ensuring that while the group is able to interact and develop collaborative relationships, the number of nurses is not too large to be manageable. The group would ideally be comprised of representative from a variety of workplaces.

Selection for the role is carried out by the Program Facilitator and is dependant upon a review of the completed application form

c) Recruitment and Selection queries

"How often will recruitment for the program be advertised?"

Recruitment to the program would occur as necessary to address attrition. Usually, the preference would be to replace the nurse who has left with another staff member from the same facility, unless that facility already has other Link Nurses.

"What if no-one leaves the program over a 12 month period but I am very keen to join?

Any approach to join the Link Nurse Program must be by way of completing the application form. If a large number of applications are received either through a recruitment campaign or independently to the recruitment process, then the number of Link Nurse places will be reviewed with a view to increasing the program capacity.

"What if three nurses from the one facility apply to become Link Nurses?"

The three nurses would be accepted into the program if there were available places in the program due to lack of responses from other facilities by the due date of the expression

"How would you pick which one of the three nurse's joins the program if only one spot is available?"

The three nurses would be offered the opportunity of undertaking an interview with the Program Facilitator

4. Education and Training

The Link Nurse role is underpinned by education and training, ensuring the nurses have the clinical knowledge to fulfil the requirements of the role.

Education and training will be promoted in a number of ways.

- The conduct of a needs analysis of the Link Nurses
- Distribution of a Link Nurse flyer that provides items of interest including education and training opportunities and scholarships/grants etc
- The provision of education sessions and training workshops, as part of the Link Nurse meetings (see section 5), according to a schedule
- The provision of access to palliative care articles and journals that are evidence based

Link Nurses are responsible for determining the manner in which they will attend education sessions and meetings. The Link Nurse must either use their organisations study leave application procedure or attend the study days and meetings within their own time.

Organisations are provided with information regarding the Link Nurse Program and its anticipated benefits and retain the right to decide if they are able to support staff in their participation.

5. Link Nurse Meetings

Link Nurse meetings will be scheduled throughout each calendar year at a time and date to suit as many participants as possible. Link Nurses unable to travel to the venue will be, where possible, provided with the opportunity to participate via videoconferencing. The meetings will be hosted by the Program Facilitator.

A schedule for the meetings will be developed and distributed to all Link Nurses and terms of reference will be in place. (See next page)

Mallee Division Rural Palliative Care Project

Link Nurse Meetings

Terms Of Reference

PURPOSE:
To provide a formal mechanism for the delivery of Link Nurse education, training and support that will promote best practice palliative care and cross organisational communication and relationship building.

Objectives	KPIs
To provide a forum for appropriate and relevant best practice palliative care education	• A needs analysis is conducted and is used to determine education sessions • All sessions/ training is based on best practice care relevant to each clinical area
To provide a forum for cross organisational discussion of general palliative care clinical and communication issues, but not as an avenue for reporting or actioning specific issues	• At least 4 organisations are represented in the meeting • There is a standing agenda item for "Palliative Care Clinical Delivery Issues" • Specific issues raised are fed back via the appropriate organisation for management
To provide direction and support for the Link Nurse role	• The Link Nurses are surveyed to determine the benefits of the Program • Alterations are made to the Program as a result of Link Nurse feedback

MEMBERSHIP:
Rural Palliative Care Project Officer

Link Nurses

Specialist Palliative Care Nurses- as invitees

DURATION OF MEETING: As required

FREQUENCY OF MEETING: Every 2nd month

QUORUM: Meeting will not be held if less then 5 nurses indicate they will be attending

DURATION OF COMMITTEE: Ongoing

REPORTING TO: Mallee Division of GP Rural Palliative Care Project

REPORTING MECHANISM: Committee Review Report- undertaken 12 monthly

APPROVED: ……..…..
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COMMENCEMENT DATE: July 2009

ANNUAL REVIEW DUE: July 2010

6. Review Process

The Link Nurse Program would be reviewed via:-

-Survey of those present at Link Nurse Education sessions

-Feedback at meetings (feedback as an agenda item)

-Annual survey of Link Nurses

-Survey of participating organisations

Expressions of Interest

Join Now!





Join Now!

Would you like to be a

LINK NURSE

Assisting the delivery of quality Palliative Care services in your workplace?

Expressions of interest are sought from Registered Nurses Div 1 to become part of a **Link Nurse team** being developed in the Mallee Division

The term "Link Nurse" refers to nurses who are prepared to acts as links between Specialist services, the staff/patients of the clinical areas where they work and each other. Link Nurses have been used historically to promote the concept of infection control, Quality Assurance and mental health nursing.

As a Link Nurse you would:

- **be supported to attend palliative care education sessions**
- **attend Link Nurse Group meetings to share experiences and reflect on practice in a supportive environment**
- **assist to develop and distribute resources in your place of work**
- **assist to make changes in your workplace that promote best practice palliative care**
- **gain a greater understanding of the local palliative care network and the national standards for palliative care**

How do I apply?

Complete the attached application form and forward it by….to
Carlyn Dark, Rural Palliative Care Project Officer
Mallee Division of General Practice