

Statement on Legally Accelerated Death

POSITION

National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO) supports individuals' rights to exercise autonomy as is legal in their communities and seeks to provide assistance to member organizations in communities where legally accelerated death (LAD) is an option. Nevertheless, NHPCO opposes LAD as a societal option to alleviate suffering.

RATIONALE

Known as physician assisted suicide (PAS), physician aid in dying (PAD), medical aid in dying (MAID), and other terms, LAD is both controversial and increasingly available to terminally ill individuals in the United States. However, as palliative care "intends to neither hasten nor postpone death,"¹ LAD is not a palliative intervention. In light of the underuse of hospice and palliative care to alleviate suffering, lack of comprehensive health care for persons with serious illness, lack of research about the outcomes of LAD, concerns of disability rights advocates regarding protections from coercion, longstanding racial bias in medicine, disparities in health and medical care, and lack of protections to ensure voluntary participation, NHPCO opposes LAD as a societal option.

NHPCO COMMITMENT of SUPPORT

Committed to "a world where individuals and families facing serious illness, death, and grief will experience the best that humankind can offer,"² NHPCO calls on member organizations and others to help "lead and mobilize social change for improved care at the end of life"³ by advocating for early inclusion of, and improved access to, palliative and hospice care in the management of serious illness.

NHPCO earnestly supports the timely provision of palliative and hospice care to all patients, including those choosing LAD. Sources of actual and potential suffering should be assessed and specific interventions offered to prevent and/or reduce suffering experienced by patients, families, and other caregivers. NHPCO commits to help hospice and palliative care organizations through dissemination of best clinical and regulatory practices and identification of exemplar organizational policies and guidelines pertinent to LAD.

Adopted: November 4, 2018

Expires: (November 2023)

¹ World Health Organization. "WHO Definition of Palliative Care." <http://www.who.int/cancer/palliative/definition/en/>. Accessed May 14, 2018.

² NHPCO Vision. NHPCO. <https://www.nhpc.org/nhpc0-0>. Accessed May 14, 2018.

³ NHPCO Mission. NHPCO. <https://www.nhpc.org/nhpc0-0>. Accessed May 14, 2018.