

# Training Hospice Clinicians Using CAPC's Online Curriculum

A Case Study of Bluegrass Care Navigators



## About Bluegrass Care Navigators

Bluegrass Care Navigators (BCN), previously Hospice of the Bluegrass, is a national leader in delivering high-quality end-of-life care and a pioneer in developing new programs that are responsive to the evolving needs of seriously ill patients and their families. In addition to providing hospice services, BCN operates Bluegrass Palliative Care, Bluegrass Home Primary Care, Bluegrass Adult Day Health Care, Bluegrass Extra Care, Bluegrass Transitional Care, and Bluegrass Grief Care. BCN is a two-time recipient of the prestigious Circle of Life Award through the American Hospital Association, and has been listed in “Best Places to Work” by *Modern Healthcare* magazine for multiple years. BCN employs approximately 500 FTEs across its various service lines.

## Using CAPC’s Online Curriculum to Elevate the Clinical Skills of Hospice Providers

Bluegrass Care Navigators utilizes CAPC courses to elevate the expertise and skills of clinicians and administrators across the organization. “For the hospice organization that wants high-quality educational content to support the professional development of both new and seasoned clinicians, the CAPC online clinical skills curriculum is an invaluable tool,” says Turner West, Associate Vice President of Health Policy at Bluegrass. BCN developed a formal process to integrate the CAPC online skills curriculum as part of the professional development of all full-time nurses, social workers, and chaplains across BCN’s multiple service lines.

### **BCN finds the CAPC online curriculum to be valuable to the organization in multiple ways:**

- Provides clinical staff access to high-quality, CME/CE-approved content that is readily accessible and germane to clinicians’ daily work
- Supports clinical staff retention by demonstrating BCN’s commitment to professional development, and by increasing staff confidence in managing intractable pain and bothersome symptoms and effectively communicating with patients and families
- Engages clinicians on important competencies and tools in pain management and communication skills
- Signals to patients, families, referral sources, and other stakeholders that the agency is committed to expertise and professional development at the organizational and individual level
- Creates an opportunity for earned media via press releases and social media posts for BCN clinicians who receive a CAPC Designation
- Serves as a managerial tool to ensure clinicians are investing in professional development

## Implementing Training at BCN

Recognizing that CAPC courses are evidence-based and peer-reviewed, BCN developed a formal plan to encourage the use of the curriculum across the organization.

BCN's implementation plan is as follows:

- 1. Establish service promises on education and expertise.**

BCN uses “service promises” to substantiate value to patients, families, referral sources, and other constituents. A service promise is a public commitment to a measurable level of performance that customers can expect. For example, patients, families, and referral sources value responsiveness from health care organizations. Consequently, BCN developed the following service promises: BCN promises a highly-responsive team to meet the needs of our patients, their family members, and our communities twenty-four hours a day, 365 days a year. To validate this promise, BCN responds to requests for hospice services within one hour and admits eligible patients for services the same day. Additionally, all patient calls are returned within fifteen minutes, no matter the time of day or night.

Each department in the organization develops service promises. The clinical and education teams at BCN identified communication and symptom management expertise as being valued by patients, families, and referral sources and developed the following service promise: BCN promises medical, emotional, spiritual, and personal care from clinicians through advanced training and expertise. One way the clinical teams validate this promise is that 100% of BCN's nurses, social workers, and chaplains either have certification in hospice and palliative care, or receive Designation through the Center to Advance Palliative Care within twelve months of hire.

Because of this service promise and the overwhelmingly positive response to the content provided by CAPC, utilization of the curriculum is widespread. As of early 2019, clinicians at Bluegrass Care Navigators have completed more than 2,800 CAPC courses, and 150 of them have received CAPC Designation in either pain management or communication skills.

- 2. Educate clinical staff and leadership about CAPC's online curriculum.**

Once the service promise on expertise was established, the BCN education department developed an action plan to familiarize all clinical staff with the CAPC curriculum. Every clinician was provided with a handout on how to create a profile on the CAPC website, directions on how to take a course, and contact information for a specific individual on the education team who could walk a person through creating an account and finding training content if needed. The education team utilized CAPC reports to notify clinical managers on course completions and Designations received by clinicians.

- 3. Recognize early adopters.**

BCN celebrated the first few nurses and social workers that received a CAPC Designation. The marketing team prepared a press release that was picked up by local papers, and social media posts were created containing a picture of each employee, their supervisor, and the certification

of completion. Senior leadership and other managers acknowledged these employees at team meetings. BCN continues to recognize employees when they achieve Designation status through CAPC.

**4. Use utilization data to encourage engagement.**

CAPC provides all member organizations with monthly reports that detail utilization of the online curriculum, as well as reports of attendance at CAPC events such as webinars and Virtual Office Hours. BCN uses these reports to understand adoption of the clinical curriculum, and details are shared with clinical managers. Managers in turn share training statistics with their teams. BCN's President and CEO, Liz Fowler, also highlights training data as part of her Year-in-Review report to staff and the BCN community.

**5. Elicit feedback from users.**

BCN surveyed staff on their experience with the CAPC training curriculum and found that new nurses report increased confidence in caring for patients and families, while experienced clinicians find the content to be engaging and relevant to their daily work.

“The construction of the modules is highly engaging. They actually ask you to think about how you would approach conversations with patients and families, and give good feedback based on your answers. I thought it was well organized and very relevant to hospice social work. I felt like it gave me some good food for thought, and I've kept several of the suggestions in mind since I completed it.”

**Candice Jackson, MSW, LCSW, ACHP-SW, BCN**

“I thoroughly enjoyed the CAPC curriculum on pain management. I found the content to be logically organized and relevant to my work.”

**Amanda Holcomb, RN, BCN**

“There are numerous aspects of the CAPC curriculum I appreciate. The case studies were germane to hospice clinicians and applicable to my work. The scenario questions and ‘expert reply’ examples initiated critical thinking. Finally, the plethora of online resources accompanying each module is incredibly helpful. Overall the content was excellent and concise.”

**Esther Sapp, MDiv, BCN**

“The CAPC online skills curriculum is user friendly, informative, and incredibly helpful for a new hospice nurse.”

**Jordan Mullins, RN, BCN**

## Lessons Learned

Bluegrass Care Navigators' strategy for implementing CAPC training:

- 1. Ensure support from senior leadership.**  
Senior leaders should be aware and supportive of approaches to systematic use of the CAPC online curriculum across the organization, and should encourage managers and clinicians to use the courses as part of their clinical training.
- 2. Acknowledge team members who receive CAPC Designation in a specific content area.**  
Consider press releases for local papers, social media posts, and recognition in newsletters and at team meetings.
- 3. Review CAPC utilization reports.**  
CAPC provides easily understandable monthly reports on utilization of the curriculum; managers can use these reports as part of their evaluations and to track progress against training goals.