

***Pathway to Compassionate Care: The Significance of End-of-Life Doulas in Pediatrics**

In person only

*This session is approved for 1.5 SW CE credits

Summary:

In 1984, St. Mary's Hospital for Children developed the first pediatric palliative care program in the country marking a major milestone in addressing the unique needs of children with life limiting conditions and/or life altering conditions. Evolving that foundation into a Compassionate Care Program in 2025 represents a significant advancement in holistic, family-centered care, which includes: a new assessment tool (Rubric), pre and post admission workflow, and family friendly compassionate care pals assigned to the four-level pathway. The goal is to embed compassionate, patient centered care throughout the care continuum, ensuring dignity and holistic support for residents and families facing serious illness. End-of-Life (EOL) doulas play an integral part in supporting this process. This workshop highlights how doulas complement clinical pediatric palliative care by providing non-medical, holistic, and continuous support throughout the child's illness trajectory until the time of death. Participants will examine how EOL doulas help families navigate emotional, spiritual, developmental, and cultural needs while improving communication, decreasing caregiver stress, and supporting meaningful memory-making. Through case examples, discussion, and practical tools, attendees will gain insight into integrating EOL doulas into interdisciplinary pediatric care teams to enhance patient- and family-centered support.

Learning Objectives:

1. The learner will be able to understand the benefits of a four level Compassionate Care Pathway and rubric assessment.
2. The learner will be able to describe what an EOL doula is and how the doula model of care aligns with pediatric palliative care.
3. The learner will be able to discuss ways doulas help honor cultural practices, values, and personal beliefs surrounding pediatric EOL care.
4. The learner will be able to describe how doulas enhance communication, normalize emotions, and provide anticipatory guidance within a family-centered and culturally sensitive framework.

Speaker: Marianne Muzic-Lucenti, LCSW, APHSW-C, PMH-C, is the Palliative Care Program Manager at St. Mary's Healthcare System for Children, where she provides support to families with medically fragile and terminally ill children. She oversees the Complimentary Care Program and Doula Volunteer Program. Certified as an International End of Life Doula and Advanced Palliative and Hospice Social worker, Marianne has over 25 years' experience advancing palliative care clinical social work practice within pediatric post-acute and rehabilitative care setting. She is a mentor for Palliative Care Fellowship program offered through Fordham Graduate School of Social Service. Marianne was recognized by the Association of Death Education and Counseling at the 2026 national conference for her clinical contributions to the field of thanatology.