

Pediatric Palliative and Supportive Care Team (PPSC) at Children's of Alabama (COA)

Children's of Alabama's Palliative and Supportive Care Team is a specially trained team that provides care for children and their families with serious illnesses. Our team is designed to work with care providers to support patients and their loved ones. We focus on all levels of suffering including physical, social, emotional, and spiritual. The team includes four physicians (2.25 FTE's), one nurse practitioner, a social worker/coordinator, a program secretary, and a music therapist. This team provides inpatient services at Children's of Alabama and in-person or virtual palliative and supportive care assessments in the COA specialty clinics. The team began in 2009, as an inpatient consultation service for inpatients at COA. Since 2010, a PPSC physician has been an integral provider at the COA Duchene's Muscular Dystrophy Clinic. Since 2016, the PPSC team maintains an embedded service in the COA NICU. As an extension of the team's commitment to their patients, PPSC most frequently serves as the physician attending of record for their patients receiving home hospice services. As of 2024, the Pediatric program has graduated 10 pediatric or med-peds palliative fellows from their pediatric track as part of the overall UAB Hospice and Palliative Medicine Fellowship program. Our faculty also provides education to COA residents and fellows in advanced communication training workshops, as well as being active members on the Ethics Committee. The team serves as an active clinical partner for a variety of palliative and supportive care research studies. Annually, the PPSC team provides over 600 patient visits.

The Children's of Alabama Palliative and Supportive Care Team works together with other healthcare providers and psychosocial staff to promote wellbeing, by helping patients and families to maintain hope, preserve dignity, ease the burdens of care giving, and experience comfort, care, and peace. The PPSC team seeks to do this by providing patients and families with symptom control/pain management, emotional and spiritual support, clear communication between patient, family and healthcare providers, assistance with understanding your child's medical condition and treatment options, goals of care and end of life planning, and transition to hospice (when appropriate). Current leadership as the clinical director is provided by Susie Buckingham, MD.