

Apply Now for the Circle of Life Award

The 2027 Circle of Life Award application period is open. Eligible U.S. organizations providing direct care for patients with serious or life-limiting illnesses can apply. AHA membership is not required. **Applications are due by noon Central Time, Tuesday, July 15, 2026.** For questions, please contact circleoflife@aha.org.

Award Information

The Circle of Life Award celebrates innovation in palliative and end-of-life care. Organizations making progress, as shown in metrics and current data, in one or more of the following areas should apply:

- Providing access to care grounded in the Institute of Medicine's (IOM) STEEEP framework
- Demonstrating that palliative care is fully integrated into the care continuum
- Developing new, innovative models of care that elevate palliative and end-of-life care standards
- Using evidence-based tools to track progress and improve services
- Collaborating with community organizations to improve health and minimize disparities

Palliative care programs **must be in place for a minimum of 3 years**. Innovations and achievements must have a **minimum of 2 years of data** at the time of submission to support their success and sustainability. Prior awardees may not apply again for 3 years.

Meeting the Hospice Conditions of Participation (CoPs), The Joint Commission (TJC), or Community Health Accreditation Partners (CHAP), DNV, or Accreditation Commission for Health Care (ACHC) criteria for health care is not considered innovative unless the program is moving care upstream or creating novel programs for specific populations.

The information requested in this application is very important for the Circle of Life Award Committee as it seeks to understand your program. Please be as complete as possible in providing the information, related metrics and current data to demonstrate progress. Metrics must be a mix of structural, process and outcomes measures. Use the domains from the [Clinical Practice Guidelines for Quality Palliative Care](#) to shape your responses (please highlight only those aspects that apply to your organization/program).

In 2027, the Circle of Life will recognize up to four programs: up to three winners and additional finalists for other noteworthy programs. Awards will be presented at the 2027 AHA Leadership Summit, July 18-20, in San Diego. One representative from the honoree organization will receive complimentary registration, flights, and hotel accommodations.

Evaluation and Judging

Applications are reviewed by the Circle of Life Award Committee, comprising experts in palliative care, hospice medicine, social work, spiritual care, long-term care, quality improvement, management and finance. The Committee selects organizations for site visits and determines award recipients. AHA is grateful for the extensive volunteer contributions made by Committee members.

Site Visits

Up to four programs will be visited between Nov. 10-21. Site visits last five hours. Selected programs must provide additional information in advance. All materials are confidential.

Requirements

Programs must be operational for **at least three years**. Honored programs must:

- Identify key leaders to work with AHA and move the field forward
- Participate in outreach and education
- Provide logos, photos, and videos for AHA use
- Designate representatives for the award ceremony and panel discussion at the Leadership Summit

Applications become AHA property and may be used for best practices and case studies. In these cases, AHA will contact the organization to explore its interest in participating.

Please note: Only one program per health care system is eligible to apply. If your hospital is a member of a health care system, please contact system leadership to ensure only one hospital applies from your system.

Applications submitted by vendors and consultants will not be reviewed.

Deadline

Submit applications by **noon Central Time, Tuesday, July 15, 2026**. We are unable to accept late applications.

Additional Guidance

For readiness information, visit www.aha.org/circleoflife. The strongest applications are developed by a team, rather than a single individual. Contact Circle of Life staff at circleoflife@aha.org with questions.

Sponsors

Supporting sponsors of the 2027 award are the [American Hospital Association](#) and the [Catholic Health Association](#) of the United States. Contributing sponsors of the 2027 award are the [American Academy of Hospice and Palliative Medicine](#), the [Center to Advance Palliative Care](#), and the [National Association of Social Workers](#)

Palliative Care Certification

Physician certification is available from the [American Board of Medical Specialties](#) or the [American Osteopathic Association](#). Nursing certification is available from the [Hospice and Palliative Credentialing Center](#) (APRN, RN, pediatric RN, and nursing assistant). Social worker certification is available from the Social Work Hospice & Palliative Care Network and the [National Association of Social Workers/National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization](#). Palliative care and hospice advanced chaplain certification is available from the [Association of Professional Chaplains](#) and the [National Association of Catholic Chaplains](#). Counseling certification is available from the [Association for Death Education and Counseling](#). Physician assistant certification is available through the [National Commission of Certification of Physician Assistants](#).

Please note:

- Answer all questions marked with an asterisk. If a question doesn't apply, enter "NA."
- Incomplete applications will not be reviewed.
- Submitted applications cannot be modified or edited.
- Each uploaded page should be single-sided with one table, graph, or chart per page. Applications that exceed the maximum allowed pages will not be reviewed.
- The application portal closes at **noon Central Time, Tuesday, July 15, 2026**. We are unable to accept late applications.
- After submission, you will receive a confirmation email. If you don't see it in your inbox, check your clutter/spam/junk folder.

Begin Your Application

To begin your application, close this tab. If you applied for the Circle of Life Award last year, enter your username and password to access the application portal. If you did not apply last year, create an account on the application portal to start, save, and return to your application. Only one account per organization is allowed.