

The Role of Interdisciplinary Teams in Caring for People with Serious Illness in Primary Care Settings

A Social Work Perspective

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Social Workers Are Essential

- More than 600,000 professional social workers in the U.S.
- Value-based Profession
- NASW Code of Ethics

Standard 1: Ethics and Values



- Social workers shall function in accordance with the values, ethics, and standards of the NASW Code of Ethics.
- Cultural competence requires knowledge, awareness, humility, skills and observable practice behaviors, which are central to evaluating effective practice.



Integrated Primary Care

- Intersection of medical and behavioral health services to more fully address the spectrum of care that patients face while receiving primary medical care.
- When patients seeking treatment for a physical health condition enter the care setting, we should assess for psychosocial needs, which accompany physical health conditions.

Advocacy and Distributive Justice

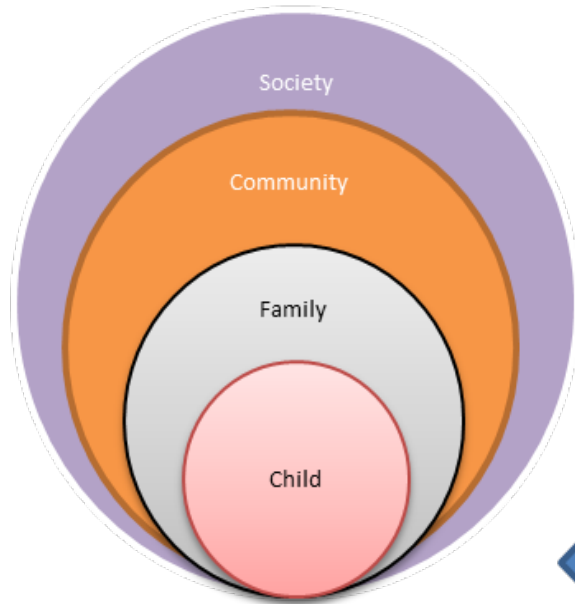
- Advocacy is a core value and important attribute of social work practice.
- Social workers champion the rights of individuals and communities with the goal of achieving equity.
- Distributive justice —to counterbalance wealth and power in the allocation of health resources and the means for eliminating disparities.

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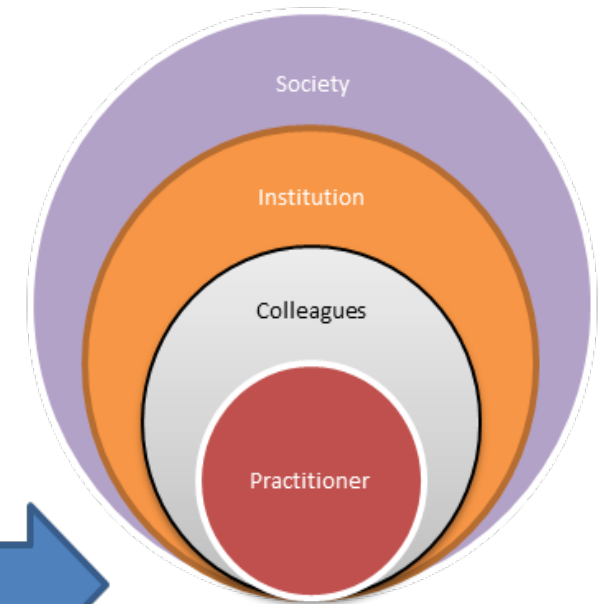
- Professionally trained social workers focus on the comprehensive factors that affect health and wellness.
- Serious illness care includes treatment planning, coordination of care, administration of services, etc., with the goal of relieving suffering.
- Psychological, emotional, social and spiritual support; and pain management treatments and services to patients and families

The Relationship Context

Patient System



Practitioner System



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- Services may be delivered at hospice centers or through in-home care services.
- Hospice social workers provide services in community-based care settings and also, may follow up with the patients who need intensive medical care during hospital visits.



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- Palliative care social workers conduct home visits to assist patient and families to establish effective care at home. They also may act as an advocate with medical providers.
- Social workers receive specialized training and education that is competency based and critical for ensuring that all patients and families receive optimal serious illness care.



A Social Work Perspective

- Social workers have a critical role as members of primary care teams with patients living with serious illness.
- Different from other clinical team members, we focus both on the person and their environment.
- There is a need to assess the challenges and know the resources are available within and outside of primary care settings to provide equitable care.

Leadership in Integrated Primary Care

Social workers can play a key role helping the team to develop competencies and action steps towards eliminating disparities.

Addressing long-standing systemic health and social inequities, which have created structural barriers to hospice and palliative care for many Black and Brown people who continue to be at risk for greater morbidity and mortality.

References

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