The Hospice Spiritual Care Provider and Medical Social Worker: Roundtable Discussion
## Role of the Hospice Spiritual Care Provider (a.k.a. Chaplain, Spiritual Care Coordinator (SCC))

The many roles and responsibilities of a hospice Spiritual Care Provider include:

- Assess patient spiritual concerns
- Develop and implement spiritual plans of care
- Document within the patient’s medical record observations that support the patient’s ongoing need for hospice
- Offer and provide pastoral care and counsel
- Work as a liaison between the patient/family and the community
- Participate in weekly IDT meetings and collaborate with the IDT team
- Provide bereavement counseling and facilitate bereavement group activities
- Support the patient’s facility/community staff, as well as internally supporting hospice staff
- Facilitate ongoing communication among patients, families, and staff
- Assist patients and families with rituals and spiritual care practices that promote the patient’s well-being
- Attend Care Conferences and joint visits with other members of the IDT, as needed, to enhance care

What other roles/responsibilities do you take on as a hospice Spiritual Care Provider?
The many roles and responsibilities of a hospice Social Worker include:

- Complete Psychosocial Assessments
- Develop and implement Psychosocial Plan of Care
- Provide patient advocacy (within the IDT team and community)
- Connect the patient/family and IDT team with outside resources
- Coordinate patient transfers/discharges/relocations
- Educate the patient, family, and IDT team on psychosocial issues, family dynamics, etc.
- Foster collaboration among patient, family, IDT team
- Attend Care Conferences and conducting joint visits with team members, as needed
- Document to support patient’s ongoing need for hospice services
- Attend ongoing training and in-service education
- Participate in weekly IDT meetings and collaborating with IDT team
- Assess for and provide interventions for suspected abuse, neglect, elopement and safety management

What other roles/responsibilities do you take on as a hospice Social Worker?
Social Services and Community Partners

- In hospice, we serve patients wherever they call home, which can create many different community structures and relationships.

- We partner with Independent Living Facilities, Assisted Livings, Board and Cares, Memory Units, Skilled Nursing Facilities, and home patients

- What are the challenges you have faced in collaborating with these community partners?

- What lessons have you learned and/or what has helped you overcome challenges when collaborating with community partners?
The Social Services team are active and engaged members of the interdisciplinary care team.

At times, role conflicts/confusion do occur – sometimes between the social worker and the nurse, hospice spiritual care provider and outside spiritual/religious provider, etc.

Have you experienced role conflicts/confusion among the IDT group?

What, in your experience, helps navigate and avoid role conflicts/confusion among the IDT?
Boundaries help us to provide the safest care possible in the therapeutic relationship between the healthcare worker and the patient / family. Boundaries are mutually understood physical and emotional limits of the relationship between the patient and the hospice provider. Professional Boundaries give both the hospice provider and families a range of acceptable behaviors.

- Remember to never give out your personal information, including your personal cell phone number!

- In what ways do you establish professional boundaries?

- Have you ever had incidences of struggling to maintain professional boundaries?
Surviving vs. Thriving in Hospice!

- Self Care is a priority and necessity – not a luxury – in the work we do.

- Acceptance: We can not do more for our patients than they are willing to let us do.

- Acceptance: Patients/families have made a choice to live in a particular community or location and we can accept and respect that choice

- Remember to prioritize self care and professional boundaries to avoid burnout!

- What self-care habits do you practice to help prevent burnout in hospice?
References

