

**Social Workers in the Field of Health Care**  
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I have been a Social Worker for almost 30 years in the medical field and feel blessed to be a part of the working family at Hocking Valley Community Hospital. Many people have their "own idea" of what a social worker actually does in medical management, and rightfully so. There are many areas of social work in the world of health care, so a person unfamiliar to this profession may not be aware of this scope of practice. The purpose of this article is to provide information so each person could utilize services available to them if ever in need. Social workers want to help - that is why we do what we do!

Social workers in hospital settings provide direct services to patients with conditions compassing the whole continuum of care, and usually require a master's degree as a condition of employment. Health care social workers may be known as case managers, patient navigators, or therapists, and play a key role in medical settings by helping patients and families address the impact of illness and treatment. They also provide assessment and appropriate interventions to help achieve optimal recovery and quality of life.

There are many specialties in the healthcare field of social work. In larger facilities social workers are usually assigned to certain areas that are based on diagnosis and age. Some examples of specialization are pediatrics, oncology, behavioral health and emergency/trauma. You may be thinking when does a medical social worker become involved in the care of a particular patient? In most health care facilities social workers try to see each patient to determine if there is anything beneficial to a patient during their stay and/or after hospital discharge. When visiting each patient is not feasible, they are usually referred by the provider or identified as someone at a higher risk of needing assistance. Situations such as when a patient has experienced a significant loss; when there may be safety concerns; when a patient is in need of more resources; and/or a patient may need help with future healthcare support/planning.

Social workers also play a vital role in the interdisciplinary team. We work closely with physicians, therapy, nursing, and many other areas of the hospital team. Medical social workers are knowledgeable of the community agencies that serve the patients to help support, manage, or negotiate a need after hospitalization. I am thankful to work with a great community and feel blessed to work with committed citizens. Most of our agencies are compassionate to improve the quality of life for each one of us when that exigency is there. We have many people serving in these agencies that want to contribute to the needs of our loved ones.

Social Workers just celebrated Social Work Month in March. This year the theme was *Leaders. Advocates. Champions.* There are around 680,000 social workers in the United States wanting to make this nation a better place for all mankind. In healthcare alone social workers try to comfort patients that experience mental and physical illnesses. Some illnesses/injuries

are very traumatic and we want each person to begin the process of recovery in the best way that fits their journey.

Social Work is problem-solving - sometimes there may not be a solution but we work to figure out a plan for our patient to make it better. A very touching quote to remember: Everyone has a purpose in life...a unique gift or special talent to give to others. When we blend this unique talent with service to others, we experience the ecstasy and exultation of our own spirit, which is the ultimate goal of all goals – Deepak Chopra. Social workers are advocates for their patients - so we want our services to be utilized.