



Texas Association for
Home Care & Hospice
Leading ★ Advancing ★ Advocating

57th Annual Meeting
Thursday, September 3, 2026
Crockett CD Room
11:15am-12:15pm

4b. Beyond Resource Referral and Spiritual Presence: Interventions for Social Workers and Spiritual Care Providers

Presented by:

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Thank you to our Partners:





Beyond Resource Referral and Spiritual Presence: Interventions for Social Workers and Spiritual Care Providers



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Objectives

- Define the role of the social worker in hospice.
- Define the role of the spiritual care provider in hospice.
- Review interventions.

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What is Social/Psychosocial Distress?

▪ Social Distress

- The disruption of one's social life — such as changes in roles, relationships, sense of belonging, sexual function and appearance — that cause suffering of mind and body.

▪ Psychosocial Distress

- The uneasy feeling of anxiety or depression in response to a specific demand that results in temporary or permanent harm.

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Expectations of a Hospice Social Worker

- The social worker is a required discipline and member of the interdisciplinary team.
- What are your expectations for your social workers?
- The basics include:
 - Completion of the comprehensive assessment
 - Development of the plan of care
 - Resource referral
 - Psychosocial support
 - Emotional support

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Beyond Resource Referral

- A primary role of a social worker in any setting is advocating for those who cannot advocate for themselves.
 - Giving the patient and family a voice.
 - Encouraging open communication with the medical team.
 - Encouraging open communication with family members.
 - Assisting with coping mechanisms for the patient and the family.
 - Mandatory abuse reporting responsibilities.
 - Allocating community and federal resources to assist in maintaining a patient in the home or in finding alternative living arrangements.
 - Assessing for suicidality.

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The Psychosocial Care Plan

- Problem:
 - A father and his dying son have problems with “unfinished business” regarding the father’s absent behavior.
- Goal:
 - Resolve the unfinished business.
- Intervention:
 - Social worker will facilitate communication and act as a mediator between father and son.

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The Psychosocial Care Plan

- Problem:
 - Secrecy and collusion regarding the patient's medical condition.
- Goal:
 - Patient will be kept abreast of his or her medical condition, per request.
- Intervention:
 - Social worker will assess patient's understanding of medical condition.
 - Social worker will facilitate communication and act as a mediator between family and patient.

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The Psychosocial Care Plan

- Problem:
 - Daughter is frustrated caring for her mother with abusive history.
- Goal:
 - Daughter will resolve feelings of anger and frustration.
- Intervention:
 - Social worker will encourage self-care for daughter.
 - Social worker will assist daughter with unresolved issues.

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The Psychosocial Care Plan

- Problem:
 - Declining status/imminent death.
- Goal:
 - Patient will transition peacefully through the dying process.
- Intervention:
 - Discuss common experiences and memories with patient and family.
 - Review common responses to death and dying with patient and family.
 - Provide patient with end-of-life education.

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The Psychosocial Care Plan

- Problem:
 - Question if patient can remain unassisted in the home environment.
- Goal:
 - Patient will reside in the safest possible environment.
- Intervention:
 - Assess patient's cognitive status to make decisions about care needs.
 - Assess/refer patient to community resources to assist patient in the home.

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The Psychosocial Care Plan

- Problem:
 - Caregiver is having difficulty with impending death.
- Goal:
 - Caregiver will have decreased fear/anxiety regarding death and dying process.
- Intervention:
 - Encourage patient and caregiver to discuss end-of-life issues, fears, and concerns.
 - Encourage self-care for the caregiver.
 - Acknowledge caregiver's concerns and feelings.
 - Provide resources to assist.
 - Discuss respite care.

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What Is Spiritual Distress?

- Spiritual Distress
 - The disruption of one's beliefs or value system that affects a person's entire being.

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Expectations of a Hospice Spiritual Care Provider

- The spiritual care provider is a required discipline and member of the interdisciplinary team.
- What are your expectations for your spiritual care providers?
- The basics include:
 - Completion of the comprehensive assessment.
 - Development of the plan of care.
 - Providing spiritual support.
 - Referral to local clergy.
 - Sacraments.
 - Assistance with funeral/burial/final arrangements.

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Beyond Spiritual Presence

- A primary role of the spiritual care provider concerns issues of meaning...the "why"
 - Why is this happening to me and my family?
 - How do I make sense of this?
 - What gives me hope to continue?
 - What gives me comfort?
 - What's next?
- Provide support to the other interdisciplinary team members.
- Provide bereavement services.

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The Spiritual Care Plan

- Problem:
 - Patient/caregiver is struggling with impending death.
- Goal:
 - Patient/caregiver expresses an increased sense of closure and peacefulness at the end of life.
- Intervention:
 - Discuss patient's life experiences to gain closure.
 - Caregiver experiences a sense of accomplishment at having supported the dying individual.
 - Assess for complicated grief and bereavement.

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The Spiritual Care Plan

- Problem:
 - Patient is struggling with funeral/memorial service preparation.
- Goal:
 - Appropriate clergy/faith groups have been contacted for spiritual support.
- Intervention:
 - Assess patient/family for spiritual support by contacting clergy/faith groups.

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The Spiritual Care Plan

- Problem:
 - Patient desires specific spiritual support not provided by the hospice spiritual care provider.
- Goal:
 - Assist in securing spiritual support specific to cultural beliefs if hospice spiritual counselor not utilized.
- Intervention:
 - Assisted patient/caregiver in securing spiritual support specific to cultural beliefs.

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The Spiritual Care Plan

- Problem:
 - Patient and caregiver are grieving loss of role(s).
- Goal:
 - Patient's and caregiver's social and emotional needs concerning grief will be met.
- Intervention:
 - Encouraged patient/caregiver to have open conversation regarding anticipatory grief.
 - Assisted patient and caregiver with normalizing the situation.
 - Instructed patient and caregiver in reframing issues.

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The Spiritual Care Plan

- Problem:
 - Patient feels disconnected from God/higher power.
- Goal:
 - Patient expresses increased feelings of security and peacefulness.
- Intervention:
 - Evaluate for feelings of the loss of meaning and purpose in life.
 - Assisted patient/caregiver with finding meaning.

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The Spiritual Care Plan

- Problem:
 - Patient is struggling with life choices.
- Goal:
 - Patient/family demonstrate and express love and forgiveness.
- Intervention:
 - Assisted patient to explore issues of forgiveness.
 - Assisted patient to share life story.

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Going Beyond the Basics

- Hire for fit, not to fill.
- Utilize social work and spiritual care providers in orientation and in preparing educational materials for staff and patients and caregivers
- Audit, audit, and audit.

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Questions?

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Thank You

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