

This resource is a result of the collaborative efforts of NHPCO's Next Generation Leadership Council.

The Social Worker is responsible for assessment and intervention with the patient and family within his or her scope of practice as a member of the interdisciplinary team. Performs duties that include assessment, intervention, care planning, outcome evaluation, documentation, and collaboration/communication with the Interdisciplinary Team to assist patients and families with their goals and assist the team in delivering hospice care to the patient and family. May supervise interns and unlicensed social workers. Job responsibilities do not include therapeutic counseling, for which a license would be required. These include but are not limited to - psychotherapy and/or cognitive therapies. The purpose of this document is to provide information on common skills that may be considered for the role of Social Worker.*

Required Skills

The following skills are considered mandatory for Social Workers

■ **Masters Degree in Social Work or a baccalaureate degree in Social Work** from an institution accredited by the Council on Social Work Education or a baccalaureate degree in psychology, sociology, or other field related to social work.

■ **State Licensure / Credentialing as required by your respective State**

■ **Compassion**

- The ability to demonstrate understanding and concern for those suffering physically or emotionally.

■ **Strong Communication**

- Strong communication skills are necessary to work with the care team, the patient, their family, and any other medical professionals that may be involved in the patient or family's needs. The ability to be clear and answer questions as they're asked as honestly and as caring as possible.

■ **Observation Skills**

- Observing changes in the patient's behavior, speech, appearance, eating habits, and within the family can provide clues to other challenges that may be occurring.

■ **Patience**

- The ability to remain calm while in a potentially emotionally charged situation.

■ **Organization**

- As a caregiver, you will be caring for multiple patients. The ability to keep care needs, communication, and schedules organized is essential.

■ **Interpersonal Skills**

- Not everyone handles stress in the same manner. Interpersonal skills include knowing how to communicate with others, strong EQ, patience, observation, and compassion.

■ **Flexibility**

- No two patients, no two days, and no two deaths will look the same. Flexibility will allow you to adapt to the situation at hand.

■ **Initiative**

- The willingness to take charge and get something done when it needs to get done without being asked or told to do so.

■ **Empathy**

- Ability to use an empathetic approach when facilitating patient and family care.

■ **Collaboration / Team Player**

- Ability to collaborate effectively with the interdisciplinary team. ■

■ **Professionalism**

- Ability to maintain professional composure at all times, most especially during challenging and stressful situations.

■ **Patient Advocacy**

- Assist in facilitating freedom of choice.

■ **Reliability**

- Ability and willingness to complete assigned tasks and duties.

■ **Integrity / Ethical**

■ **Trustworthy**

Mid-level Skills

Ideally, Social Workers will have experience with the skills noted below but may not be experts in this area.

■ **Cultural Awareness**

- Having an awareness of other culture's customs, beliefs, and needs to help address end-of-life needs.

■ **Emotional Strength**

- Caring for the terminally ill can become emotionally exhausting. Self-care is important to maintain balance.

Social Worker (cont.)

■ **Adaptability**

- Ability to assess, evaluate and adapt practices in caring for patients and families

■ **Problem Solver / Critical Thinking**

- Demonstrated ability to assess and respond to the needs of patients and families in varied settings

■ **Ability to multi-task**

- Ability to complete multiple tasks concurrently, as needed

Preferred Skills

These skills are those that Social Workers may have experience with; however, they are not required for this position.

■ **Physical Strength**

- It may be necessary to move a patient, shift furniture, carry food/supplies, etc.

■ **Experience working with Electronic Health Records (EHR)**

■ **Basic Tech Skills & Troubleshooting**

- Able to use equipment fully in the field when needed and Ability to evaluate and assess basic technical issues such as poor connection, minor errors, etc.

■ **Experience with death and dying**

■ **Ability to work on-call shifts (nights/weekends/holidays)**

■ **Medical knowledge of end-of-life care**

- Ability to demonstrate and relate medical knowledge in accessing hospice & palliative care services.

■ **Teaching Ability**

- Teaching and educating patients and caregivers is crucial in hospice & palliative care.

Note: State requirements may dictate specific skill sets for Social Workers. In that scenario, please default to the requirements of your state. Please also refer to CMS Conditions of Participation related to personnel requirements.