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The Scope of Social Work Practice in Transition to Adulthood Care

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Background

Successful Transition to Adulthood Programs involve a multidisciplinary team to accomplish two key objectives: 1) help the patient and family learn how to manage or self-manage the patient's care; and 2) successfully and appropriately transition care to adult providers when young adult patients age out of pediatric care.

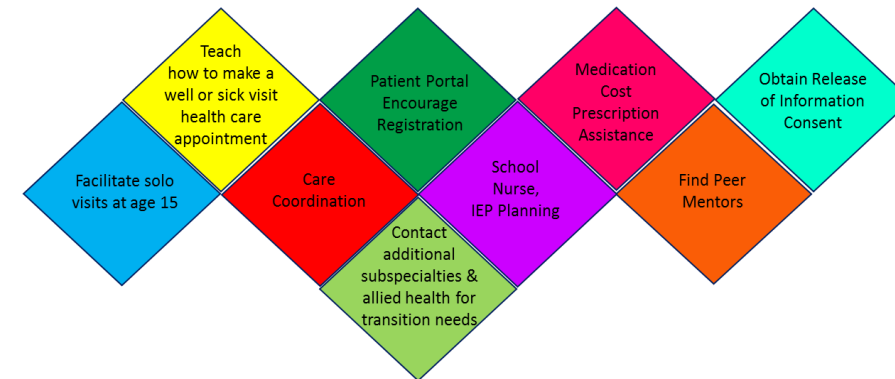


Social work practice began in hospitals in 1906 when social determinants of health were recognized as impacting the physician's plan of care to treat the patient's illness, injury or disability. Ida M. Cannon, nurse and social worker practiced at Massachusetts General Hospital to "make medical care effective."

This data identifies how social work knowledge and skills address the need to assess for and intervene with social determinants of health to reduce or eliminate barriers to manage health and successfully navigate from pediatric to adult care.



Shared Practice with Health Care Team



Recommendation

Health care teams need to identify the scope of responsibilities each member will address.

Methods

A study of roles executed by social workers and nurses to address common transition planning needs was performed in a large, urban tertiary care pediatric hospital in the Midwest. The duties were stratified based upon tasks assigned only to social work versus those shared with nursing or other team members.

Discussion

Staffing assignments vary greatly among and within settings. Social workers may be assigned to one provider, multiple providers, one team, one Division or multiple Divisions. Smaller teams generally enable the social worker to broaden their scope of practice. Past experience and comfort level with various responsibilities also impact the role of each team member.

Conclusion

Social work adds a valuable contribution to the health care team focused on transition to adulthood work. As increasing fiscal constraints impact health care systems, it is important for social workers to demonstrate the value of providing psychosocial care that produces cost-savings, risk reduction and patient/family satisfaction.