

## The Association of Oncology Social Work and Association of Pediatric Oncology Social Work Joint Position on Family Centered Care

The mission of the Association of Oncology Social Work (AOSW) is to advance excellence in the psychosocial care of persons with cancer, their families, and caregivers through:

- advocacy
- education
- networking
- resource development
- research

The mission of the Association of Pediatric Oncology Social Workers (APOSW) is to enhance the emotional and physical well being of children with cancer and their families through:

- professional education
- advocacy
- outreach
- influence on program and policy development

With more health plans becoming managed care contracts, hospital stays are shorter, more complex care is done away from large medical centers or in the home. Oncology social workers, although part of the treatment team throughout the patient's therapy, recognize that the one constant in the patients' lives is their family. Oncology social workers also recognize that the word "family" has to be loosely defined to incorporate unique patient circumstances.

### **Definition of Family Centered Care**

Family centered health care is an approach to health care delivery that redefines relationships between and among consumers and health providers. Information sharing and collaboration between patients, families, and staff are cornerstones of family centered care. Family centered care is a philosophy and approach to health care that shapes policies, programs, facility design, and day-to-day interactions of staff.

Family centered practitioners recognize the vital role that families play in ensuring the health and well being of family members of all ages. They acknowledge that emotional, social, and developmental supports are integral components of health care. With this approach they empower patients and families and foster independence; support family decision making and care giving; and build on individual and family strengths.

Potential benefits of moving toward a family centered model of health care delivery are improved medical and developmental outcomes; creation of health programs that are more responsive to patient and family needs; potential reduction of health care costs; ensuring better utilization of resources; and enhancing patient, family, and staff satisfaction.

**Whereas:** AOSW and APOSW are organizations of social workers whose missions endorse assisting patients and families in managing the biopsychosocial aspects of their disease. As an

integral part of the treatment team social workers focus primarily on the patient in the context of the family, the impact of the illness on this unit, and the influences of this unit on outcome.

**Be It Resolved That:** AOSW and APOSW support practice of family centered care in all health care systems where children and/or adults are receiving treatment for cancer. AOSW and APOSW support the leadership role of social work in developing and implementing family centered care practices.

In assuming this position, we acknowledge several important issues:

- Family centered care is a value-driven, holistic approach to care that depends on the family acting in partnership with health care systems for the best possible outcome.
- Cancer is a family illness and decisions regarding care have consequences for family members as well as patients and potentially impact subsequent generations.
- The word family is variously defined.
- Respect for the family and a nonjudgmental attitude are inherent in family centered care.
- Family centered care includes establishing linkages to resources at all levels of care.
- Family centered care requires a philosophical shift from deficits to strengths, control to collaboration, negative support to positive support, information gatekeeping to information sharing, rigidity to flexibility, and dependence to empowerment. \*

*\*Adapted from The Institute for Family Centered Care*