

SOCIAL WORKER PROVIDES CRITICAL SUPPORT TO FAMILIES OVERWHELMED BY CRISIS

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My Role: I am the direct care social worker on one of the COVID-19 units in the ICU and provide ongoing support for patients and families throughout the course of their ICU stay.

I work with the care team to determine a safe discharge plan for patients who have recovered and are ready to leave the hospital. Of course, we must always take into account the safety of both the patient and their family.

I also provide bereavement counseling to families – both during the end-of-life process and after a patient has passed on. So many families are overwhelmed by this crisis. I help them navigate hospital and community support –for death certificates, funeral arrangements, locating property. By assisting with these tasks, I also have an opportunity to provide continued emotional support.

Impact of COVID-19: When Jacobi became inundated with very critical patients, and we opened additional ICU units, I took on a direct care role. The most difficult part of the pandemic is the sheer volume of it. We've had such a large influx of patients.

That difficulty is also compounded by visitation suspension. We're making sure we keep people safe. But we're also assisting patients who aren't able to have visitors and helping family members who aren't able to visit. It's a big concern for family members since they want to be here for their loved ones, especially considering how critical they are.

Tough Moments: There have been tough days with a lot of loss. To do our job well, we have to get to know the families, understand where they're coming from. We have to learn more about our patients, get to know them as a person, know what their life was like before they were hospitalized. Knowing all of that, then sharing in their loss, has been difficult.

Why I'm on the Frontlines: Family is important to me. So, I want patients to be taken care of the way that I would want my family to be cared for.

I have to say that the families have been really appreciative. Even through the challenges that they are facing, they are expressing gratitude for the medical providers, social workers and all hospital staff. One family member sent an email after her brother passed to share how grateful she was for everything we did for him. She said her brother died with dignity. And that means a lot.

