

Social Work Practice in Home Health Care

Ruth Ann Goode

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"Home health care is the fastest growing segment of the health service industry and employment in home health care has doubled since 1988," says the author. This publication provides a vast array of information regarding home health care services. Goode supports her information by supplying numerous research studies, the findings and the conclusions reached.

In researching social work services specifically in home health care, Goode found that the number of social workers employed is growing slowly as agencies begin to understand the role of the social worker. This growth is supported by the conclusion Goode obtained from speaking with professional medical social workers: "Some said they would expect higher utilization and more employment growth if agencies really understood the social work practice area and the benefits of having a program." This statement makes it clear that it is imperative for the social worker to understand his or her role when entering into this field.

Goode pays special attention to the details of social work intervention. Several sections of the book are devoted to identifying appropriate clients and their problems. Goode identifies specific problem areas and suggested interventions/treatments regarding dementia, behavior problems, substance abuse, caregiver issues, abuse/neglect, placement and discharge planning. Probably the most important and helpful aspect of this book is the explanation of Medicare and Medicaid coverage, identifying what social work services are reimbursable through this coverage and the proper documentation needed to verify the need for services. Medicare and Medicaid coverage is the most complicated and misunderstood component in home health care services making it one of the most important pieces to the continuing growth of social work.

Goode enters into another complication of social work in home health care, that is, the required documentation needed for reimbursable services. Appendix E is devoted to copies of the numerous types of documents that a social worker in home health care needs to be familiar with. This includes important documentation forms such as: physician orders, care plans, evaluations, visit/calendar worksheets, interdisciplinary referrals and other necessary forms. This allows the reader an opportunity to become acquainted with some very involved forms that consume much of the time of a medical social worker.

Social Work Practice in Home Health Care touches on coordination of services among the home health care team. This is a topic that a whole chapter could be devoted to due to its critical importance in meeting the needs of a client. Yet, through Goode's thorough coverage of the social worker's role, she provides a clear understanding of where his or her job stops and another starts. (December, 1999)

MICHELE MCDONALD (January / February 2000)

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