

## Communication, Problem-Solving and Decision-Making

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Oncology social workers support patients and families in communicating with treatment issues to team members and talking with children, schools, extended family, friends or co-workers. Pediatric social workers assist in developing school reintegration plans and provide families, students and teachers with support in addressing the pediatric oncology patient's special educational needs.

There is tremendous variability regarding communication styles and decision-making across cultures. Attention to these differences by skillful practitioners is a necessary component of competent healthcare in a diverse society. Yet most oncology social workers continue to report a lack of confidence in their cultural competence with direct impact upon their delivery of care and the effectiveness of their problem-solving abilities (1). Although oncology social workers may be well versed in the importance of communication, they may not be prepared to apply this general knowledge to team practice and effective case collaboration (2-3). Previously developed curricula from ELNEC and other COH courses have emphasized the importance of developing clear communication skills for use with patients and their families as well as among interdisciplinary team members. Similar collaborative communication-skills training would benefit oncology social workers and will be included in the proposed curriculum.

### References

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