

Introduction to Outpatient and Inpatient

Introduction to Outpatient and Inpatient Supportive Services

Supportive Services

Designed as a quick-reference guide for students, new staff, and anyone needing a clear overview.

1. What Are Supportive Services?

Aspect	Definition	Primary Goal
Supportive Services	Non-clinical or ancillary services that help patients navigate the health-care system, maintain health, and achieve optimal outcomes.	Enhance safety, comfort, continuity of care, and overall quality of life.
Scope	Includes social work, case management, nutrition, pharmacy, transportation, counseling, rehabilitation, and patient education.	Address psychosocial, logistical, and functional needs that medical treatment alone does not cover.

2. Inpatient Supportive Services

Service	Typical Setting	Key Functions	When It's Triggered
Medical Social Work	Hospital wards, ICU, step-down units	Assess psychosocial needs, arrange discharge planning, connect to community resources.	Admission, change in clinical status, or anticipated discharge.
Case Management	Inpatient units, multidisciplinary rounds	Coordinate care across specialties, monitor length of stay, ensure appropriate level of care.	Complex diagnoses, high-risk patients, or insurance requirements.
Pharmacy Services	Inpatient pharmacy, bedside medication administration	Medication reconciliation, therapeutic drug monitoring, patient counseling.	Admission, medication changes, or high-risk drug regimens.

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Service	Typical Setting	Key Functions	When It's Triggered
Supportive Services			
Nutrition Support	Clinical nutrition department, bedside consults	assessments, prescribe enteral/parenteral nutrition, educate on diet.	Malnutrition risk, specific disease states (e.g., GI surgery).
Rehabilitation Therapy	Physical, occupational, speech therapy units	Early mobilization, functional assessments, goal-oriented therapy plans.	Post-operative, stroke, trauma, or deconditioning.
Patient & Family Education	Bedside teaching, printed material, digital portals	Teach disease process, self-care skills, medication use, warning signs.	Throughout stay, especially before discharge.
Spiritual Care / Chaplaincy	Chaplain office, bedside visits	Provide emotional and spiritual support, facilitate rituals.	Patient request or identified need.
Safety & Comfort Services	Housekeeping, environmental services, security	Maintain clean environment, infection control, patient safety.	Ongoing throughout stay.

Key Features of Inpatient Services

- **24-hour availability** (or on-call) to meet acute needs.
- **Integrated into daily rounds** and care plans.
- **Focused on rapid stabilization** and preparation for safe discharge.
- **Documentation** is part of the medical record (e.g., social work notes, therapy progress).

3. Outpatient Supportive Services

Service	Typical Setting	Core Activities	Typical Referral Sources
Outpatient Social Work	Clinic, community health center	Ongoing counseling, resource linkage, assistance with insurance, crisis intervention.	Primary care, specialty clinics, hospital discharge.

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Service	Typical Setting	Core Activities	Typical Referral Sources
Case Management (Community)	Home health agencies, outpatient clinics	Long-term care coordination, follow-up appointments, medication adherence monitoring.	Discharge planners, physicians, patient self-referral.
Pharmacy Outpatient Services	Ambulatory pharmacy, medication therapy management (MTM)	Comprehensive medication review, adherence counseling, immunizations.	Primary care, specialty clinics, direct patient request.
Nutrition Counseling	Outpatient dietitian office, tele-nutrition platforms	Dietary assessment, chronic disease nutrition plans, weight management.	Primary care, cardiology, endocrinology, bari