

# Registered Nursing Serious Illness Designation: Foundational Skills

---

This Learning Pathway provides comprehensive online education in nursing practices to improve quality of life for patients living with serious illness. Nurses can use Serious Illness Designation to demonstrate expertise in working with this patient population.

## Assess the Needs and Concerns of Patients

### Discussing Serious News

Learn best practices for having patient-centered conversations about a serious illness diagnosis.

### Revised Edmonton Symptom Assessment System (ESAS-r)

Assesses for nine symptoms experienced by patients with serious illness and quantifies their severity. Alberta Health Services.

### PHQ-4 Validated Screening Tool for Anxiety and Depression

Brief (4-question) screening tool for anxiety and depression.

### Social Needs Screen

Assessment tool and resource list to address social risk factors.

### FICA Spiritual Assessment Tool

Short conversation guide to elicit information about a patient's spiritual history and preferences.

### CAPC Palliative Care Referral Criteria

Checklist of triggers for referral to a specialty palliative care team.

# Strengthen the Clinician-Patient Relationship and Understand Care Goals

## Clarifying Patient Goals of Care

Learn best practices for building trust, eliciting patient values, and having patient-centered conversations about goals of care.

## The Role of the RN in Advance Care Planning

A position statement from Hospice & Palliative Nurses Association (HPNA) is that healthcare decision-making is very personal and fluid. It is part of the nurse's role to advocate for the patient and family regarding their healthcare preferences.

## Responding to Emotion: Vital Talk Quick Guide for Conversations

Conversation framework and key phrases to share empathy and deepen your relationship with your patient. Vital Talk, 2019.

## Unconscious Bias: What It Is, How It Influences Health Care, and What You Can Do About It

Defines unconscious bias and how it influences patient care, and provides ways to reduce the impact of unconscious bias on care delivery.

## Talking with Patients About Hospice

This resource lists step-wise tips to foster comfortable, productive dialogue for 'the hospice conversation'.

# Manage Pain and Symptoms

## Anxiety

After completing this course, learners will be equipped with evidence-based strategies to identify and treat anxiety in patients living with a serious illness.

## Constipation

Constipation occurs in at least 70% of patients living with a serious illness and often goes unrecognized. After completing this course, learners will have the tools to successfully identify and manage the impact of constipation.

## Depression

After completing this course, learners will have the tools to accurately identify and treat depression in patients living with a serious illness.

## **Dyspnea**

After completing this course, learners will have the tools they need to manage dyspnea, including the physical causes of shortness of breath and the emotional impact on the patient.

## **Nausea/Vomiting**

Nausea and vomiting are common symptoms of serious illness and can cause dangerous complications. After completing this course, learners will be equipped with practical skills to identify, manage, and reduce these symptoms.

## **Course 3: Patient Factors that Influence Prescribing Decisions**

Patient and family factors that influence prescribing decisions for patients with serious illness.

## **Course 8: Monitoring for Opioid Efficacy, Side Effects, and Substance Use Disorder**

Ongoing evaluation of opioid benefits, risks, and side effects for the patient with serious illness.

## **Cognitive Assessment Tools**

Recommended validated cognitive assessment tools.

# **Prevent Crises and Help Patients Plan Ahead**

## **Care Planning**

Learn techniques to help patients and their caregivers plan for the future, both during the early stages of a serious illness and as a disease progresses.

## **Supporting Patients with Serious Illness to Plan Ahead**

Considerations for clinicians, patients, and families upon diagnosis, including advance care planning, personal care needs, legal and financial planning, work and retirement planning, and prevention of common medical risks.

## **Reducing Risks for Older Adults**

This course provides context and best practices for identifying older adults at risk for poor outcomes, including falls, delirium, and caregiving challenges.

## **FindHelp.org**

National database of community services - enter a zip code and locate assistance with food, housing, health services, care needs, and other resources.

## **Psychosocial Assessment for Patients with Serious Illness**

Assessment questions to help nurses understand the impact of serious illness on a patient's relationships, social and spiritual supports, financial stability, and trust in the health care system. Fast Facts, April 2020

[View this page online](#)

You must be [logged in](#) to have full access to these resources. Not sure if you have a CAPC account? [Check here](#) to create one.