



# Our Stories

Submission

## Headline: Social work holds the power to empower

### Story:

Social workers strive to provide their clients with tools to meet their needs. They provide support and guidance, and work to empower clients to find solutions and resources.

March 19-25 is the week in which we recognize social workers for all that they do. The theme of this year's Social Work Week is "Social Workers – the Power to Empower."

Katie Ball and Cheylyn Shipley are social workers for Acute Care Pediatrics and the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit at Royal University Hospital. They established a parent and caregiver coffee time on Acute Care Pediatrics, every Thursday afternoon from 1:30 to 2:30 p.m. Parents and caregivers are invited to come and hear from some of the different professionals who care for their children.

"We try to gear the discussion to their needs, depending on which parents or caregivers are able to attend," Ball explains. "For example, if there are mostly parents of babies attending, the discussion might be geared to feeding and nutrition led by the registered dietitian. The recreation therapist might come and talk about how they can help support children and families during their hospital stay. We also offer discussion topics such as coping while a child is admitted to Acute Care Pediatrics and navigating the hospital and community resources."

The sessions have been running for nine weeks, and the number of parents and caregivers attending is increasing. It isn't always easy for a parent or caregiver to leave the bedside of their child, but the break can be very refreshing for them. Parents and caregivers benefit from the educational aspect of the session, and they also have an opportunity to connect with other parents and caregivers.

One parent said she appreciated being able to access the social workers and dietitians one-on-one in a more casual and comfortable setting, which made it easier for her to ask the questions she wanted to ask. She stated that she appreciated being able to meet other parents who were in a similar situation, and she felt meeting other parents created an opening to continue further conversations back at the bedside.

"We work to empower the parents and caregivers," says Shipley. "They often feel helpless as they may not be able to make their child feel better. We give them tips on how to get the clarification they need from the healthcare team."

"We encourage parents and caregivers to take care of themselves so that they are able to continue providing the care their children need," notes Ball. "We reinforce to parents how important they are to their child's healthcare team as they know their child the best."

### Image(link to images here):

### Caption:

### Approvals: