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SERIOUS ILLNESS CONVERSATION GUIDE
SUBSTITUTE DECISION-MAKERS
A CONVERSATION TOOL FOR CLINICIANS

CONVERSATION FLOW	PATIENT-TESTED LANGUAGE
1. Set up the conversation • Introduce ideas and benefits • Prepare of future decisions • Ask permission	"I'd like to talk about what is ahead with your _____'s illness and do some thinking in advance about what is important to him/her so that I can make sure we provide him/her with the care that they'd want - **is that okay?"**
2. Explore prior advance care planning conversations and documentation	"How much has your _____ discussed with you about about his/her priorities and wishes, especially about his/her health and illness?" "Does he/she have any previous advance care planning documents?"
3. Assess illness understanding and information preferences	"What is your current **understanding** of your _____'s illness now and how it might change over time?" "How much **information** about what is likely to be ahead with your _____'s illness would you like from me?"
4. Share prognosis and medical information • Tailor information to expressed preferences • Allow silence, explore emotions • Provide a warning: "I have some bad news.", or "The news is not good." • Frame as "wish.., worry..."	"I want to share with you **my understanding** of where things are with your _____'s illness..." *Uncertain:* "It can be difficult to predict what will happen with your _____'s illness. I **hope** he/she will continue to live well for a long time but I'm **worried** that he/she could get sick quickly, and I think it is important to prepare for that possibility." **OR** *Time:* "I wish we were not in this situation, but I am **worried** that time may be as short as _____ *express as a range, eg. days to weeks, weeks to months, months to a year*)" **OR** *Function:* "I **hope** that this is not the case, but I'm **worried** that this may be as strong as your _____ will feel and things are likely to get more difficult.
5. Explore key topics • Goals • Fears • Strengths • Functions • Trade-offs	"What would your _____ say would be his/her most important **goals** if/when his/her health worsens? "What would your _____say are his/her **biggest fears and worries** about his/her health?" "What gives your _____and you **strength** as you think about the future and your _____'s illness?". "What do you think your _____ would say are **abilities** that are so critical to him/her that he/she couldn't imagine living without them?" "If your _____ becomes sicker, how much would he/she say he/she would be **willing to go through** for the possibility of gaining more time?
6. Close the conversation • Summarize what you've heard • Make a recommendation • Check for alignment • Affirm commitment	"It sounds like _____ (sumarize goals and fears) is very important to your _____." "Given your _____'s goals and priorities and what we know about his/her illness at this stage, I **recommend**.... "How does this plan seem to you?" **"We're in this together."**
7. Document your conversation on the ACP record	
8. Communicate with key clinicians	