



## The impact of Social Work and Case Management

*From Kate DeVore, Social Worker, Pulmonary*

Mid-morning of Monday, Feb. 15th I got a call letting me know that a patient with a complex medical history was ready to discharge. In normal circumstances this would have been a complicated discharge as the family lives out-of-state. However, in the midst of the inclement weather events, this discharge seemed like it would be impossible.

I spoke with the case manager, the nurse practitioner, the nursing staff and charge nurse, as well as my social worker manager. I read a number of social work notes from the past days that painted a bleak picture for this discharge plan. The patient, a sweet 2-year-old, and his father, had been left at CCMC without any of their belongings, without transportation to their out-of-state home and without any money to provide for themselves. We had our work cut out for us, but in true Cook Children's fashion, the team came together and we were able to accomplish a huge feat!

I made sure Dad had some Camelot Court meal cards, which were graciously donated to Case Management, as he hadn't had a hot meal in several days and couldn't afford to buy one. The floor staff provided a change of clothes for the Dad and a set of clothing for the 2-year-old son, who only had his hospital gown. The medical team agreed that the patient didn't have a safe discharge plan until Social Work could secure transportation home, so I got to work.

Through the generosity of Southwest Airlines, I was able to set up a free flight for the patient and father for Tuesday morning. Case Management provided the family with a taxi voucher to get to the airport and a car seat to insure the patient would safely arrive there. I was able to drop off the flight confirmation page, taxi voucher and car seat on Monday afternoon, however I realized that the father and son didn't have coats appropriate for the extreme weather and the patient didn't have any shoes.

Along with Dr. Hiranrattana, I was able to grab a few Walmart gift cards and after work we drove to the closest store to purchase what the family was lacking. Unfortunately, in the midst of the icy and cold conditions Walmart didn't have power and was closed. We slowly made our way to a Target in hopes that they would have power. Thankfully, though the whole area was without power, Target had a generator that was running a few lights and the self-check-out inside the store. As we parked we realized there was a line to get in and we had to make a decision, "Do we send this father and son to the airport without appropriate clothing and risk the medically complex child getting sick, or do we stand outside in 14 degree weather and wait our turn to get inside in hopes that we could find what they needed?"

Thirty-five minutes later, we made it into the store and found the only jackets and pair of shoes that would work for this family and headed back to the hospital to drop it off so that they would have coats and shoes for the taxi ride in the morning.

Later that night I checked the flight status for the Tuesday morning flight and sadly, the flight had been canceled. I informed the floor staff and we were anticipating that I would get the flight changed in the morning. When I woke up on Tuesday I decided to check the flight one more time and miraculously the flight was schedule and on-time.

That's when the frantic rush began!

The medical staff came in early to write the discharge, the charge nurse called the taxi and things were looking great...until the taxi company said they were backlogged by 3 hours and the patient was going to miss their flight.

Through some very creative and timely problem solving we were able to ensure that the father and son had a safe ride to the airport and they made it in time for their flight.

Later that evening I got a call from the Dad reporting that they had finally made it home safely and almost in tears thanking me and the CCMC staff who provided all that they needed to get safely back to their loved ones in the midst of the biggest cold snap in recent history.

What a joy and pleasure it is to work with such a compassionate, hardworking and creative team here at CCMC.