Question – I am interested in any references on end-of-life discussions with patients and family members. Or comments from your perspective. More in respect to grief and loss.

NASW Code of Ethics Standards of Practice in Palliative and End of Life Care addresses:

Roles for social workers at the end of life include:
- Enhancement of quality of life for patient and caregiver.
- Promoting autonomy and self-determination.
- Respecting cultural, religious, and spiritual beliefs.
- Address pain and symptom management as a holistic practice;
- Work with bereavement, grief, and trauma.

Social Worker should be trained in or pursue advanced training in:
- End of life issues including biological, ethical, and legal;
- Health care proxy or surrogate decision making;
- Withdrawal or withholding treatment such as termination of ventilator supports, withdrawal of fluids and nutrition, and physician aid in dying or pain management;
- Should be aware of proposed death with dignity legislation.

Common interventions for hospice and palliative care workers use:
- Counseling: individual, family, crisis intervention
- Psychoeducation
- Encourage expression of emotions (validate and normalize), effective communication and coping mechanisms
- Support groups (online or in person)
- Bereavement support
- Case management and discharge planning
- Resource management (caregiver support, financial and legal guidance, advanced directives, transitional care options)
- Advocacy/navigation of systems and empowerment.

Communication with patients at the end of life should focus on:
- Providing clinical care that supports the patient’s and family’s values and beliefs;
- Listening to the patient’s experience and meanings they ascribe to the disease and dying process:
  - Being present
  - Paying attention to verbally spoken words and non-verbal cues

Grief Counseling focuses on:
- Normalizing feelings and behaviors
- Helping the griever identify and express his or her feelings
- Actualizing the loss
- Providing continued support throughout the process
Grief and Loss Resources:

- [CSWE Grief, Loss and Bereavement in Older Adults Teaching Module](#)
- [CSWE Coping with Loss and Grief with an Older Woman – Teaching Module](#)
- Free Social Work Tools and Resources: [Social Work toolbox.com](#)
- [Centering & Grief digest Magazine](#) (and resources)

Palliative care and end-of-life trainings (NOTE: this is not an exhaustive list of programs)

- [Palliative Care Skills for Social Workers and Counselors](#) – online education through California State University
- [Palliative and End-of-Life Care training](#) – Silver School of Social Work NYU (currently online)
- [Palliative and End-of-Life Care Certificate](#) – Smith College School for Social Work
- [Post-MSW Palliative Care social Work Certificate](#) – Hospital Association of Southern California
- More resources CEU/trainings can be found here: [Social Work Hospice & Palliative Care Network (SWHPN)](#)

Advance certification through the NASW: [Advanced Certified Hospice & Palliative Social Worker](#)

Reference: