

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Department serves the collective best interests of the entire state through our services to those clients who need our help. The client may be an individual child, adult or an entire family. Regardless of the make up of the client group our philosophy of service is the same.

The Family

Individually, and as a Department, we recognize that the family is the cornerstone of our society. As such the family develops and maintains within its members the beliefs and actions that make up society. No other institution can carry out this responsibility as well as the family. However, when the family's ability to carry out its responsibility fails or when the family does not exist, the Department assumes a role which seeks to reestablish or strengthen the old or newly established family. The mission of our services programs is to do just that.

Mission of Services Programs

The mission of our services programs is:

1. whenever possible, to help our clients help themselves; and when that is not possible,
2. to arrange or provide reliable care and protection of those who are unable to help themselves; and
3. to ensure that all clients receive sound efficiently delivered services regardless of their county of residence.

This means we must help all clients make the fullest use of their strengths to break down barriers that prevent them from solving their own problems. This is true whether clients come for our services voluntarily or are mandatory referrals.

Principles

Whether our intervention is voluntary or non-voluntary, certain principles should be adhered to. They are:

- the grounds for intervention must be rooted in law and the reasons for intervention must be compelling;
- the need for coercive intervention should be reduced through the provision of voluntary remedial and support services to families and communities;
- when intervention is necessary, the intervention must be made in the least intrusive manner and in the shortest time span which is appropriate to meet the needs and solve the problems of the individual or family.

Resources

In spite of overwhelmingly complex issues, we must remain aware that our clients are not the problem, but only individuals and families **with** problems. As we look for resources to assist clients, we must recognize that they and their own support systems are their own most important resource. They have not only the problems but also many of the solutions. This means we must recognize the individuality of all clients and their needs, as well as the extent of their capacities for self-determination. The mutual trust and respect that is so critical between clients and workers can only be developed in this atmosphere.

Client's Welfare

We are committed to the concept that the client's welfare is our most important concern. This means that services are tailored to meet each client's needs and to recognize the unique aspects of each case. It also means the provision of those intervention services which are closest to the natural support systems that already exist for the client.

Results

Intervention in our clients lives should always be directed toward the accomplishment of specified results. These results may be some change in client behavior, the identification and solution to a client's problem, or the maintenance of some behavior that enables the client to cope with an unsolvable problem.

Services Plan

The identification of specified results is accomplished during the joint (client and specialist) development of a services plan. To the fullest extent possible, all services plans should be directed toward

more independent functioning in the least restrictive setting consistent with the clients' needs.

The development and carrying out of this plan should involve the highest level of client participation and decision making. This should be done while recognizing any limitations in the client's capacity for self-determination. Client involvement in the services plan and an emphasis on the least restrictive setting will optimize the success of the Department's efforts.

Philosophy

The Department's philosophy is also that decisions are made at the lowest appropriate level. The Services Requirements Manual is intended to provide an abbreviated definition and explanation of Department responsibilities and an improved framework for more flexible decision making by the local office staff.

Program Requirements

The program requirements list only the minimum that **must** be done. Policy is written with only the minimum requirements identified so that there can be local adaptation, above and beyond state requirements, based upon local needs. As with any policy, the purpose of these program requirements are to effect the implementation of the laws governing the programs and to ensure consistent and fair implementation across the state. They were also written to expand the freedom that is needed to respond to locally specific situations.

Decision Making

Given the program requirements, there are numerous decisions that must be based on the specific circumstance of each individual client and case. The local office specialists have established the closest relationships with the clients, have the most extensive knowledge about the problems and their causes, and have the best knowledge of local resources.

Therefore, the local office specialists, with the support of the Department's technical resources, are in the best position to help clients make necessary decisions. The Department's philosophy is not only to allow, but to **insist**, that first line staff make these decisions. The program requirements and suggested guidelines contained in the Services Requirements Manual are written to

support that decision making approach. The material in this manual is intended to provide guidance with that process.

Specialist Expertise

The services material and the decision making philosophy put a premium on the expertise of the local office specialists when interacting with their clients. This expertise can be obtained through:

- years of experience,
- consultation with managers or other DHS staff,
- information provided by program offices, and
- training.

With this expertise, specialists will recognize the need to provide prompt and courteous services, to treat all clients with respect and dignity and to be an effective listener. This means communicating to clients an accepting, empathetic and non-judgemental attitude. Such expertise is critical in obtaining the cooperation from clients that is needed in order to make the decisions that will mean the successful resolution of the client's problem(s).

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

None.