Provide advocacy and representation services

CHCAD504A

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	Generic Community Services	ARRTS Pty Ltd	TAFE SA Regional	10/11/2009
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	Generic Community Services	ARRTS Pty Ltd	TAFE SA Regional	02/09/2009
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	Generic Community Services	ARRTS Pty Ltd	TAFE SA Regional	02/09/2009
978-1-74227-207-8	Client self-determination in case management	ARRTS Pty Ltd	TAFE SA Regional	02/09/2009
	Generic Community Services	ARRTS Pty Ltd	TAFE SA Regional	02/09/2009
978-1-74226-497-4	Select appropriate research strategies	ARRTS Pty Ltd	TAFE SA Regional	12/11/2009
	Generic Community Services	ARRTS Pty Ltd	TAFE SA Regional	12/11/2009
978-1-74227-829-2	Monitoring and evaluation in community services	ARRTS Pty Ltd	TAFE SA Regional	23/09/2009
	Generic Community Services	ARRTS Pty Ltd	TAFE SA Regional	
978-1-74227-309-9	CHCAD504A Assessment tasks	ARRTS Pty Ltd	TAFE SA Regional	02/09/2009

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Welcome

Welcome to the unit of competency CHCCAD504A *Provide advocacy and representation*.

This unit of competency is accredited under the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF).

This resource describes the knowledge and skills required by the worker to represent the interests of service users, the community and/or the community services and health industries. In the context of this resource, representation will include the development of community representative and industry participative roles and positions in influencing policy processes and decision-making forums.

Using a Jigsaw resource

This resource consists of a number of Mini Publications which contain information and assessment tasks relevant to this unit of competency. These Mini Publications piece together like a jigsaw to support the requirements of the National Training Package outcomes for this unit.

Each Mini Publication is mapped to the unit's performance criteria and essential skills and knowledge. Refer to the charts at the end of this introduction for details. Take some time to browse through the resource as a way of familiarising yourself with the learning materials.

It is important to know that each Mini Publication has a dual purpose. The first is that it can be part of an accredited unit of competency. Secondly, it can be used separately as a 'stand alone' resource to support non-accredited training.

Jigsaw is not a Registered Training Organisation (RTO). In order to gain competency in this unit, you must be enrolled with an RTO and complete the activities and assessment tasks set for you by your training provider.

The term 'facilitator' as used in this resource refers to the person (eg: teacher, lecturer, tutor, program coordinator) who has direct involvement with the learner.

Recognition of current competence

If you have evidence that you are already competent in this unit, discuss the possibility of an 'up-front assessment' with your facilitator. With up-front assessment you are assessed on the skills and knowledge you already have before starting the unit.

Activities

As you study this resource, you will be asked to complete a number of activities, which appear at relevant points in the learning materials and will be indicated as shown below:

Activity

Activities may require you to reflect on relevant readings, undertake a practical exercise, or address a number of questions. Responses to these activities will be included at the end of each Mini Publication.

Assessment tasks

This resource contains a set of suggested assessment tasks. When you have completed the assessment tasks, submit them to your facilitator. If your assessment is not satisfactory, your facilitator may ask you to redo it or will provide alternative assessment tasks.

Ensure that you appropriately reference your work using the Harvard system, or in the manner required by your RTO.

Any assessment tasks and/or activities included in this resource are suggestions only. Facilitators may like to adapt or modify the activities and assessment tasks to meet a particular training context and/or learning need of a student.

Suggested resources

Employer specific policies, procedures, protocols and practices.

Blackman, L 2002, *Representing children and young people*, Victorian Law Foundation, Melbourne, Vic.

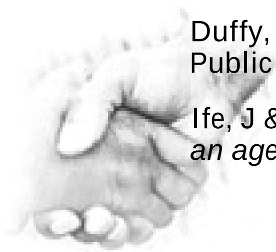
Cole, K 2000, *Crystal clear communication*, 2nd edn, Prentice Hall, French's Forest, NSW.

Disability Action 1997, *Advocacy and people with a disability: a learning package*, DARE program, Adelaide, SA.

Disability Action 1997, *Introduction to advocacy: a learning package*, DARE program, Adelaide, SA.

Duffy, B 2001 *Working the system – A guide for citizens, consumers and communities*, Public Interest Advocacy Centre, Sydney, NSW

Ife, J & Tesoriero, F 2006 *Community Development: Community-based alternatives in an age of globalisation*, 3rd edn, Pearson Education, French's Forest, NSW.



Kenny, S 2006, *Developing communities for the future: community development in Australia*, 3rd edn, Nelson Thomson Learning, Melbourne, Vic.

Nash, A 2001, *People.dot.Community: a resource for effective community activism*, Villamanta Legal Service, Geelong, Vic.

Some activities/assessment tasks may require access to the Internet. If you do not have access, speak to your facilitator about possible access points in your local community.

Achievement of competency in this unit may require students to have access to an industry-relevant workplace. Activities will sometimes refer to 'your workplace'. If you are not currently employed, you may need to undertake work experience in order to fulfil the requirements. Please discuss with your facilitator before you begin the unit.

How long will it take?

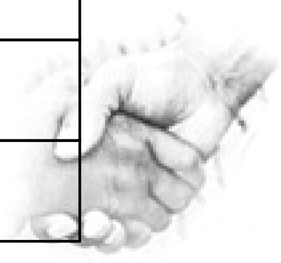
This depends on your prior knowledge and experience and your rate of learning. Your facilitator will guide you on the number of hours you are expected to spend on this unit.

Asking for help

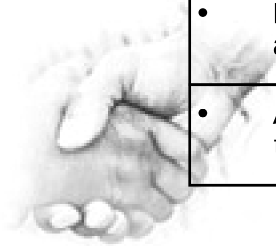
If you have difficulties with any part of this unit, contact your facilitator. Never think that your concern or question is 'silly'. If you are worried or unsure about something, it is important to ask for help. Your facilitator is there to help you with advice and guidance as and when you need it.

Mapping of essential skills and knowledge to mini publications

Essential knowledge:	Mini publication
• Working within an ethical framework.	0056
• Industry and government processes.	1738
• Community consultation and decision-making processes.	1387, 1739
• Power structures and relationships in the community.	1738
• Understanding the processes of both individual advocacy and group advocacy.	0522
• Understanding that representation and advocacy are not decision-making on behalf of a client or on behalf of a service provider.	0522
• Nature and structure of the community services and health industries.	1738
• Government legislation, regulations, policies and standards.	0648
• Legal processes regarding Power of Attorney and Guardianship.	0522



• Understanding the legal status of parents and guardians of people under the age of 18.	0522
• Processes and structures relevant to organisation goals and objectives or work role.	1387
• Industry culture.	0522, 1387
• Models of negotiation.	0522, 0816
• Research methods.	1113, 1903
• Models of management/leadership.	1513
• Complex cultural awareness.	1806
• Depending on the work role or services provided, specific knowledge of particular groups or issues may be required, including: – alcohol and other drugs	0586
– cultural and linguistic diversity	0586, 1806
– risk of self-harm	0586
– women	0586
– men	0586
– people under 18 years of age	0586, 1549
– ageing	0586, 1549
– disability	0586, 0648, 1549
– chronic illness	0056
– community education	1387
– Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people	1806, 1549
– Mental health.	0586
Essential skills:	Mini publication
• Demonstrate effective representation of individual and group concerns and interests within the organisation, the community and the community services industry.	1387
• Participate in a range of influencing, decision-forming and/or decision-making forums.	1739
• Advocate for client oriented solutions to identified needs at the service delivery level and at policy level.	0522

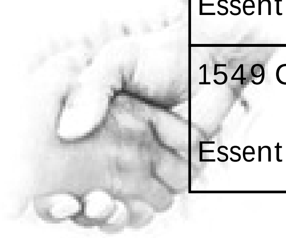


• Establish working relationship with clients, providers and funders.	0522
• Develop client decision-making abilities and independence and foster personal growth.	0522, 1549
• Support clients to be involved in advocacy and decision forming/making forums.	0522
• Educate and assist clients to access appropriate services, supports and resources.	0648, 1549
• Promote development/extension of services where service gaps are identified.	0522
• Demonstrate skills in: – information gathering and situation analysis	1113, 1903
– negotiation	0522, 0816
– presentation	1739
– complex communication	0522, 0816
– strategic planning and outcomes measurement	0816, 1903
– consultation	0816, 1387, 1421, 1738, 1739
– leadership/management.	1513

Mapping of performance criteria to mini publications

Mini Publication and relevant performance criteria
0522 Acting in an advocacy role 3.2 Promote and support collaborative planning and action. 3.3 Identify potential areas of conflict and implement strategies to address them.
1738 Define representative role and conditions of representation 1.1 Identify role, processes and conditions of representation in consultation with individuals and key groups. 1.3 Determine and implement requirements for reporting and accountability. 2.4 Calculate and assess the potential impact of developments and decisions in terms of objectives and priorities. 2.5 Provide progress and other reports and feedback to key people according to organisation requirements.

1739 Participate in decision-making forums 2.1 Identify relevant interests and concerns to be pursued in accordance with organisation positions and priorities. 2.2 Undertake work to provide a framework for pursuing promotion of relevant interests. 2.3 Create and respond routinely within work role to opportunities to reflect, promote and represent relevant interests. 3.4 Clearly determine and promote purpose and objectives.
0814 Opportunities for communicating the needs of clients Essential skills and knowledge.
1387 Use community consultation in decision-making processes 3.5 Undertake appropriate work with organising committees and board of management to maximise effectiveness.
0816 Achieving change in government policy Essential skills and knowledge.
1806 Adhere to cross-cultural communication protocols Essential skills and knowledge.
1513 Adopt appropriate leadership style Essential skills and knowledge.
1421 Consult with key people 1.2 Seek the support of key people. 3.1 Identify and develop appropriate strategic alliances.
0056 Work ethically Essential skills and knowledge.
0586 Respond appropriately to people who are vulnerable and at significant risk including children and young people Essential skills and knowledge.
0648 Encourage individual decision making Essential skills and knowledge.
1549 Client self-determination in case management Essential skills and knowledge.



1113 Select appropriate research strategies Essential skills and knowledge.
1903 Monitoring and evaluation in community services 4.1 Analyse actual work outcomes and report against agreed objectives. 4.2 Implement adjustments to strategy according to the evaluation.

Jigsaw Publications and Quality Assurance

We endeavour to ensure that material contained in a Jigsaw resource is as up-to-date and educationally sound as possible. To assist with this, representatives from Tafe SA Regional undertake a Quality Audit on every Mini Publication each year.

We welcome your feedback! If you are concerned about the content of a Jigsaw resource, please contact the Jigsaw Publications office on (08) 8234 9780, or leave comments and/or feedback via the Jigsaw Publications website:

http://www.jigsawpublications.com.au

Acting in an advocacy role (0522)

In this publication we look at acting in an advocacy role. This includes understanding the link between participation and advocacy, knowing where to find the right people and organisations to help each client, understanding guardianship, and identifying strategies to address client needs.There is a direct link between the level of participation from your client and the level of advocacy they require. The more capable your client is of participating the less dependency they would have on advocacy. The two extremes are:

1. High client participation (which would often lead to self-advocacy).
2. Low client participation (leading to need for an advocate to act on their behalf).

In the middle we have a situation where the client is capable of participating to some degree, on some issues and in some situations. In this instance, they may require an advocate to act on their behalf on some occasions, and at their request. Most advocacy lies somewhere between the two extremes in the area where an advocate would act on the behalf of the client as and when requested.

Finding the right people

The more research you do on behalf of your client, the more services and organisations you will find available to assist. The most essential part of your work as an advocate, however, is to fully understand these organisations and how they work. This will help you to prevent wasting time with the wrong organisations and optimise the outcomes for your clients.

Understanding organisations

To fully understand an organisation you need to know such things as:

- the nature of their core business
- the source of their funding
- who the decision-makers are
- the basis for decision making
- to whom the organisation reports, if anyone.

Core business

It is important that you understand the core business of each and every organisation. If you understand the core business of the organisation, you will know if they provide the service required by your client. Remember there is no point spending time seeking help or assistance from an organisation whose core business cannot meet your client's needs.

Funding

If you understand how an organisation is funded you will have a better understanding of how to appeal to that organisation. If for any reason the organisation does not have the funds to support your client, once again it is not worth your time appealing to that organisation. It is necessary that you appeal to an organisation who has the funds available and is capable of assisting your client.

Decision-making

Once you have determined which organisations will both service your clients and have the funds to do so, it is important that you approach the correct people within that organisation. Often this is a very simple thing to do. One correctly placed phone call or short visit directs you to the specific person who can handle your client.

It is also important to understand who the organisation reports to. This will prevent you from appealing to both the organisation and their reporting body and give you a better understanding of how the organisation works.

Importance of interacting with organisations

It is crucial that you learn how to interact with organisations and individuals who may be of use to your client. While dealing as an advocate you will discover that much of your work is not done individually, but with the assistance of, or through discussion with, another person. It is important for you to interact with other organisations or individuals because:

- they may hold the decision-making power for your client
- you both have a common goal of optimising your client's outcomes and satisfaction
- they may hold the funds and the resources you require for your client
- they will act in the best interests of your client
- sharing skills and knowledge will assist your client to optimise outcome
- they may have different opinions you had not considered, but once discussed may provide a better alternative for your client.

Activity 1

Think about your organisation, or one you are familiar with, and list three other organisations that would be valuable in assisting you to uphold residents' rights and responsibilities when they require advocacy.

Guardianship

You may need to interact with a Guardianship Authority in your state. This is the body that has the power to make decisions for the wellbeing of your client.

The types of decisions that a Guardianship Authority is responsible for include:

- appointing a guardian or a financial administrator to a person of limited mental capacity
- resolving conflict to ensure the wellbeing of your client
- consenting to medical or dental treatment on behalf of people with limited mental capacity
- the power to place people in nursing homes, residential care or hospitals against their will
- having the final say or final decision-making power when your client has not agreed with their doctors, nurses or psychiatrists on any specific issue.

It is important to note here that the Guardianship Board makes decisions about appointing a person's guardian and financial administrators. These two positions are very different. The first – the role of the guardian – makes decisions about a person's wellbeing and daily lifestyle. The second – a financial administrator – makes decisions about the financial situation that your client is in.

There are two ways in which a person can become a guardian. The first is to be appointed by a guardianship body, either as a full guardian or a limited guardian, depending on the level of responsibility they have, and the remaining abilities of the individual in question. The second way is to gain enduring power of guardianship. This occurs when a person has previously nominated a guardian whilst in a position of full mental capacity. In other words, they have selected the person they wish to be their guardian for a future date.

If for any reason there is no appropriate person to be a guardian for an individual, the Guardianship Authority will appoint the Public Advocate to be their guardian. The Public Advocate has the role of guardianship and also several other responsibilities. It is important for you to understand the role of the Public Advocate as you may find yourself working closely with them at times.

Decision-making responsibilities

The Guardianship legislation outlines several principles that the advocate can use to argue on behalf of their client. These principles should also be used by the advocate whilst they carry out all functions of their work.

The principles outlined in the Guardianship legislation include:

- the principle of substituted judgement – that is, prime importance must be placed on considering the wishes of the individual, and the decision they would have made if they still had the capacity to make that decision
- the present wishes of the person – these must be taken into account, even if they appear to vary considerably from their former wishes
- the principle of best interests – the legislation orders that all decisions must be in the best interest of the individual, in that they must uphold the person's rights, protect them and provide them with the proper levels of care and protection
- all existing arrangements be maintained wherever possible.

It is important that you familiarise yourself with the relevant legislation in your state and how it will affect both your clients and you in the role as carer and potential advocate. Your role as advocate is to maximise the outcomes for your client. You can fulfil this role if you understand who it is you should address and with what issues you should address them.

There are a range of services available to people in our community. As an advocate, it is essential that you understand these services and the organisations that oversee them in order to optimise the outcome for your client.

Activity 2

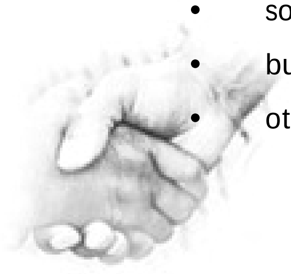
Research the Guardianship body in your state, eg: in South Australia you will access the website or brochures from the Office of the Public Advocate.

Types of services

A service is any activity that can be helpful to your client. Services are provided by a variety of different organisations.

The types of services you may find yourself involved with while working as an advocate include:

- Meals on Wheels
- life skills programs
- Home Assist Program
- Job Network for people with disabilities
- social and recreational programs
- buddy programs
- other advocacy services



- Carer Respite Centres
- various government departments
- various consumer organisations
- independent advocacy services for people with specific issues (eg: disability, aged people, asylum seekers, homeless people, children, women, breast cancer, HIV).

As an advocate you will find yourself interacting with individuals and other organisations at a variety of different levels. For whatever reason you need to meet with others, it is essential that you understand the processes of meetings and how to present yourself effectively and efficiently.

Meeting with others

Whilst meeting with others remember that as advocates you are always representing the wishes of your client. Your role is to ensure your client's needs are addressed and optimised. While meeting and interacting with others it is helpful if you understand:

- the stages of a meeting
- the basis of planning a meeting
- good meeting practice
- brainstorming techniques.

Stages of a meeting

In essence, there are three different stages of a meeting. The first stage is the introduction, the second the discussion and the last the summing up.

The introduction part of the meeting is where the purpose or reason for the meeting is explained. Each of the people are involved, the issue is presented and the meeting is outlined in order of structure. It is during this stage that your client will be introduced (if they are attending), you will be introduced as the advocate and you will stress the reason for your being there is to act on behalf of your client. Your goal to being there is to achieve the best possible outcomes for your client.

The next stage of a meeting is the discussion stage, where each of the people involved will have their say. Generally each person will have a period of time in which they can talk and they can present their arguments or their opinions. Once all the opinions and arguments have been presented, the discussion will take place. The discussion will involve each person present outlining the positive and negative attributes of different options or elements of the discussion. It is essential here that each person listens to all the others, and that you all act in the best interests of your client. At the end of the discussion stage decisions are made and they are recorded.

The last stage of a meeting is the summary. At this stage all of the ideas are summarised and then read out to the group. Any action that needs to be taken by any person is written down and allocated to the individual. All decisions are repeated back to the group and agreed upon. If a follow up on anything is required, a time and place is agreed upon. The issues that need to be discussed at a follow up meeting are also agreed upon.

While that described above is a fairly structured way of conducting a meeting, keep in mind that the same result can often be achieved over a cup of coffee or lunch. It depends on the individuals and organisations involved.

Planning a meeting

As an advocate you will find yourself often responsible for holding a meeting and therefore planning it. Your meetings will be much more successful and run much more smoothly if you plan it effectively.

There are important things you should remember while you are planning a meeting. These include:

1. Who should be there? It is essential that you have the correct person or persons present at your meeting to best improve the chances of the most favourable outcomes for your client. Where possible, this person should be the decision-maker.
2. Where and when you will meet. To do this you will need to consult with all of the people who should be present at the meeting, and find a date, time and place that is agreeable to all. Out of respect for their schedules, appropriate notice of meetings should be given for each individual.
3. What should be discussed at the meeting. It is important that you have already worked out exactly which issues you want to address with these specific people. Once you have decided on the relevant issues, it is important that you keep the meeting to those issues only.
4. Preparing yourself for the meeting. This means that you may need to find information, acquire information or place the information you have in a specific order. If, for example, your meeting is with the Guardianship Authority, you may need information such as referral letters from the client's medical practitioner, or letters from the nursing home concerning the abilities of your client.
5. Organising equipment. There may be specific equipment you need to help you present your client's case. This may be equipment your client requires in order to assist them to communicate or it could be equipment such as an overhead projector, a computer or a VCR/DVD player. If you do require any equipment it is essential that it is set up and ready to go prior to the meeting. It is also essential that you think of the comfort of the people attending the meeting. You may wish to provide tea and coffee, or light refreshments, depending on the time at which the meeting is taking place.

Good meeting practice

Good meeting practice means that you present yourself in a professional, orderly and effective manner. This allows you and your client to get the most possible out of any meeting you attend. Good meeting practice includes issues like being on time, being organised and keeping your discussions to the core issue of the meeting.

Good meeting practice should also be considered in terms of your client. Keep them informed of what is happening at the meeting. The best way to do this is to keep good notes so you can refer to them later. Remember your client may or may not be present at the meeting. Good notes should be clear, concise and accurate. You should be able to understand them yourself, repeat them back to the client and use them to be able to explain to your client exactly what happened at the meeting.

Activity 3

George, a 94-year-old man, has sustained a broken neck and femur and is now confined to bed. You need to organise a meeting with all concerned parties to advocate for the best outcomes for George. How would you organise this meeting?

The role of an advocate in meetings

As an advocate you need to be as effective as possible to maximise the outcome for your client. Therefore as an advocate you should:

- always be honest with your client
- avoid putting forward unreasonable expectations for your client, or to your client
- inform them on a regular basis what is happening
- always respect the rights of your client – including their rights to express their wishes to be informed of what is happening, to participate in any discussions or decisions
- communicate at a level your client can understand
- avoid conflicts of interest
- keep the client at the centre of all activities.

As an advocate it is important that you introduce strategies to address your client's needs.

The strategies that you use should uphold the rights and support the reasonable expectations of your client.

Strategies to address client's needs

In order to address client's needs it is important that you:

- identify the problem
- determine a goal or a solution
- organise information
- present and represent your client.

While employing strategies to address your client's needs, you should continually consult with other professionals. This will help you to expand on the possibilities available to your client, and broaden the options that are open. This will assist to maximise the outcome for your client and address their needs effectively.

Identifying the problem

A problem may be brought to your attention or as an advocate you may have to seek out the issues involved with a problem. The best approach to identify problems is to discuss it with people. You may want to:

- discuss the issues directly with your client – which may mean using fairly simple concepts and/or communicating in a variety of ways
- ask family members or friends who may spend time with your client if they understand, or can identify the problem or assist you to do so
- you may want to consult with nurses or providers of care
- you may find that a doctor is involved in assisting to identify the problem.

While identifying the problem it is essential that you identify the core problem that is an issue for your client. By discussing the matter with many different people you may discover a variety of different issues, however, only one of these issues will be the core problem.

Determine a goal or solution

It is essential that you work out exactly what it is you are assisting them with. You need to work out what it is that your client needs. To do this you will naturally consult with your client, however, you must also consult with decision-makers responsible for your client's wellbeing.

It is very important that you work out exactly what it is your client needs to assist them in overcoming a problem or an issue you have been brought in to address.

> Example 1:
>
> ---
>
> Kate is a young woman with cerebral palsy who communicates her requests, needs and wishes via a 'Liberator'. This is a device requiring laborious and skilful manipulation of Kate's head against a headrest in order to display and/or print a message. Kate decided to commence a greeting card business and enthusiastically worked on it at school for over a year. Recently, Kate has been unsettled at school and this has concerned her parents.
>
> On further investigation, it was discovered that some of the staff at the school did not see her work on the computer designing cards as appropriate school work. Kate did not want her parents to worry and in trying to handle the situation herself was becoming more upset and frustrated. Kate asks you to support her in this matter.

Organise information

It is essential as an advocate that you seek and find all relevant information for your client's needs. Once you have found this information it must also be organised. It is essential that when you attend a meeting you have all the necessary information with you. This will prevent the meeting having to be postponed to another time.

While seeking access to services for your client it is essential that you research the organisation and understand what information is required on application for the services.

> Example 2:
>
> William and Jean live in their family home. Recently Jean had a major stroke and has spent 13 weeks in hospital. Doctors have agreed to return her to her home. However, she is no longer capable of doing all of the housework and preparing all of the meals for herself and her husband.
>
> As a result, you are looking at advocating on their behalf for access to a home-delivered meals service. Your role as advocate is to approach the local service and arrange access for William and Jean.

As an advocate you will find you are often dealing with large quantities of information. It is important that you know how to determine if the information is relevant to your client's needs and will assist you in achieving their desired outcomes.

Represent your clients

The final strategy in addressing your client's needs is to actually represent them. This means you may have to attend meetings for your client or with your client, or you may have to present your client to decision-makers or tribunals.

When you are representing your client it is essential that you remember you are representing exactly what they want or would want. As an advocate you should never put in your own opinions or offer any advice.

The art of negotiation

Negotiation skills are essential in advocacy, the greater your negotiation skills the higher the chance of success and positive outcomes for your client. Negotiation is a skill that we learn at a very early age and is a skill that is used by advocates on a daily basis.

The process of negotiation involves two sides who both want something but not necessarily the same thing. Through a negotiation the two sides have to reach some sort of agreement that is acceptable to both of them. Probably neither side will get exactly what they want, but in the end by good negotiation they should be happy. The person or the side with the better negotiation skills will usually end up ahead, and be happier with what they have got. Using good negotiation skills you can secure for your client a more successful outcome.

There are four stages to negotiation:

1. Preparation

   The preparation stage is when you think about what it is that you want. In other words, you are looking at the outcome for your client. You have to make sure you have it clear in your mind what it is you are negotiating for on behalf of your client. Your aim is to secure the best possible outcome so that you fulfil your client's expectations. During the preparation stage it is important that you also look at the opposing point of view or the opposite side. If you understand what their argument may be, this may help you to negotiate a better outcome for your client.

2. Discussion

   Once the negotiation commences, each side will put forward their argument or their position. You must argue on behalf of your client. You must put forward the full story and the whole story through the eyes of your client.

3. Proposal

   Once both sides of the argument have been put forward the real act of negotiations begins. This is when one side proposes an outcome, if this is unacceptable to the other side, they will then propose a different outcome. During these events, compromises will have to be made on both sides until an outcome is reached.

4. Outcome

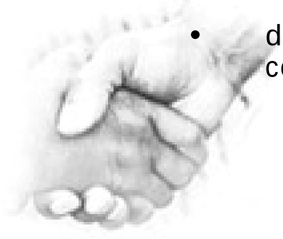
   As each side is giving and taking during the proposal stage, they are slowly moving closer and closer to an outcome. Finally, with compromise on both sides, they will agree to an outcome or a course of action.

The aim of negotiations should be a win/win situation. A win/win situation is one where both sides find that they are happy with the results or the outcome. Remember during the course of negotiation the outcomes you are seeking are those that fulfil the expectations of your client as closely as possible.

Good negotiation skills go hand-in-hand with good communication skills. It is essential therefore as an advocate that you practise these skills and keep them polished at all times.

During negotiation you will find greater success if you:

- make your position very clear
- listen carefully to the other side or the opposing opinion
- remain confident in yourself and with your client
- remain focused on the issues at hand
- aim for your goals of a satisfactory solution or outcome for your client
- take notes and keep records throughout the negotiation process
- use open discussion that allows analysis of problems
- avoid any conflict
- maintain the rights and wishes of your client
- do not become focused on winning, concentrating instead on a suitable compromise that fulfils the expectations of your client.



The most important thing you must remember during negotiations is, regardless of the issues that arise, you must take the point of view of your client and ensure their rights are being upheld. By maintaining a positive relationship with the people with whom you negotiate, you will be more likely to achieve positive outcomes for your client.

Clarifying issues

As an advocate you will continually need to clarify issues or discussions. To clarify something is to make sure that you understand it. Clarifying any issue is a powerful skill, and one that demonstrates good communication skills. As an advocate you will be using your clarifying skills on many occasions.

You may need to use your clarifying skills to:

1. Make sure you have heard and understood an issue.
2. Work out the expectations of either yourself, your client or any other person/s involved.
3. Share knowledge, skills and resources with others.
4. Understand issues of confidentiality.
5. Clarify the role and task you should undertake.
6. Understand the position of another.

Many people are uncomfortable asking someone to repeat themselves. It is essential, however, as an advocate, if you have not understood an issue that you either ask the person to repeat themselves, or you repeat back to them what you have understood, and ask if it is correct. Clarifying an issue is a simple task, but overlooking this task could have dire consequences for your client.

Referral

In your role as advocate you may also be responsible for referrals. This can be a critical part of good advocacy. A role of an advocate is often to provide information to their client about their rights, entitlements and services available to them. If your client is entitled to a particular service, it is important that they understand the service is available to them, and they know how to access those services. Referral is not just a case of giving your client the contact telephone number of an organisation or just letting your client know that they are there. Referral becomes a lot more involved when you are an advocate.

Referral can involve:

- finding an appropriate service
- finding out how that service receives new clients
- making an appointment for your client
- accompanying your client at an appointment or meeting
- presenting the new service or organisation with the opinion and point of view of your client.

Once again, it is important that you remember your client may not require you to advocate for them on all issues. As an advocate you need to be aware of the referral process and be able to inform your client of what is involved. Referral is an important strategy that addresses the needs of your client.

Conflict of interest

A conflict of interest arises when a person or persons involved in a given situation may have conflicting loyalties, gain some benefit from promoting an outcome of a situation or have ulterior motives for appearing to assist someone. Always remember that, as an advocate, it is your role and your primary responsibility to support your client's point of view and their rights, first and always.

Conflict of interest situations might include:

- an advocate who is accountable to the Board to which they are making representation on behalf of a client
- a member of a Guardianship Authority who is assessing a case involving a family member
- a nurse who must advocate on behalf of a resident to the Board of the nursing home
- the advocate may benefit from one outcome over another.

Any of these situations can prevent the advocate from speaking clearly and confidently on behalf of the client. In other words, the advocate has been put in a position where their job may be at risk, they may derive benefit from not helping the client to the utmost of their ability, or there is a similar potential outcome which will mean they will be reluctant to put the case forward as strongly as they should.

Example 3:

Cherie is a care worker at Wyatt Springs Options Coordination. While at work she is asked to give advice to Phillip about the best video, refrigerator and microwave to purchase for his new unit.

This is a conflict of interest situation for Cherie because she is part owner of the local electrical store.

Conflict of interest issues often arise between client and organisations over needs, wants and rights. Conflict of interest issues can also arise between clients and their families over needs, wants and rights of issues. The term 'needs' and the term 'wants' are both very variable especially in comparison to the term 'rights'. Therefore in dealing with needs, wants and rights there are also realities that must be taken into consideration.

Conflict of interest can often occur between the individual's rights and the needs of an organisation.

Example 4:

Larry has been a resident at the Wyatt Springs Supported Accommodation Centre. After he arrived he found that there was a no smoking policy in place and he had always smoked in bed wherever he lived. He saw this as his right and when approached by the other residents would become angry and insist that he should have been told of that condition before he was given a room.

In this situation the organisation needs to safeguard the other residents while accommodating Larry's rights.

A conflict of interest situation can occur when there is a conflict between the personal loyalty of an individual and their loyalties to their employer.

Example 5:

Gaynor works for an Advocacy organisation. When Gaynor arrives at work she discovers she has been assigned a new client called Harry. When looking over his file, Gaynor realises that Harry is her uncle.

Gaynor is in a conflict of interest situation regarding loyalty. She cannot handle this case.

All of the above situations involve conflict of interest on one person's behalf.

When a conflict of interest occurs it is important for the advocate to:

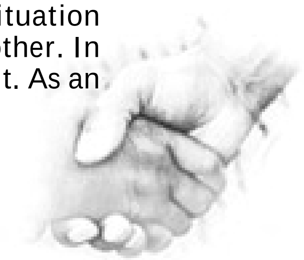
- immediately point out the conflict of interest to the client and/or any appropriate individuals or organisations
- specify exactly what the conflict of interest is
- use an independent advocacy organisation
- help to find another advocate – if this is the situation you must explain to your client why you cannot represent them
- remove the conflict from the issue – if, for example, the conflict is from family members, take the issue outside of the family situation
- agree to act as an advocate for some elements or issues but not those involving the conflict of interest.

The advocate may need to change the strategies they are employing in which to maximise the outcome for the client. It will always help your client for them to understand or know that the advocate is independent of the issue in which they are working on. This does not mean that the advocate is not independent of the client, they are only independent of the issue.

Managing conflict of interest situations

The very nature of advocacy means that it generally occurs where there is some element of conflict. Advocates, therefore, need to be very clear of the goals that they are trying to reach. They need to align themselves clearly with their clients, and only with their clients. To manage situations of conflict the advocate needs to:

1. Practise good communication and negotiation skills. As we have previously discussed, the advocate needs to bear in mind the goal that will fulfil the greatest level of outcome for their client. Bearing this goal in mind they need to use communication skills such as listening and clarifying, in order to negotiate the best possible outcome.
2. Refrain from personalising any issues. The advocate needs to make sure that they do not take the issue personally as an attack on their person, lifestyle or personality. Nor should they present their argument as an attack on any other individual.
3. Select a strategy that involves the lowest level of conflict. The advocate needs to avoid provoking any personal issues or problems with any other person involved.
4. Always remember that a conflict of interest is not an argument. It is a situation where a person will benefit personally by one particular outcome over another. In this situation the person will not be acting in the best interests of the client. As an advocate you must present conflict of interest at all times.



Activity 4

Jenny works at the Wyatt Springs Supported Accommodation Centre. A new client has been admitted and Jenny tells her supervisor that this new client is her cousin's sister. Jenny has a conflict of interest regarding confidentiality and loyalty. How would you address this situation?

Conflict in family relationships

The majority of cases that face Guardianship authorities are the direct result of conflict in family relationships. These conflicts are either because the family members themselves cannot agree or because the client does not agree with what the family wishes.

Situations of family conflict which may confront an advocate include:

- conflict between family members about the level, type and cost of care that they desire for their family member who does not have the mental capacity to make a decision for themselves
- a conflict of rights – that a family member who does not have the mental capacity to stand up for their own rights
- situations of one family member exploiting another
- conflict on decisions of daily lifestyle.

Dealing with families can be very difficult for older people because although the family may be the cause of conflict, they are also the people who have supported your client for many years. When dealing with families you are dealing with various emotions that run very deeply. These emotions are ones of loyalty, trust, understanding, giving or forgiving. It is therefore sometimes difficult for your client to fully understand the situation that is faced when a family conflict emerges.

The client-centred approach

The most important role of an advocate is to keep the client in the centre of all discussions and decision-making to maximise their outcomes. It is important that the advocate understands the expectations of the client and puts all their effort into fulfilling these expectations.

To be client-centred, it is important that the advocate:

- focuses all their energy on the client
- continually keeps the client informed on what is happening and what is going to happen
- cares about the client and the client's level of happiness
- asks the client for feedback and for their thoughts or evaluation on the process
- continually ask the client what it is they want and restructuring their strategy to fulfil this
- continually making improvements to either the strategy or the style or the approach that they are taking.

To be client-centred is to be successful in your work. It is important that you remember the role of the advocate is to uphold the rights and support to the expectations of your client. The only way you can do this effectively is to make sure you are aware of what it is your client expects.

In this publication we have looked at acting in an advocacy role, including:

- the link between participation and advocacy
- where to find the right people to help your clients
- understanding how to become a guardian
- meeting with others to advocate for your client and understanding your role as advocate in these meetings
- understanding conflict of interest and avoiding this
- keeping the client at the centre of any advocacy approach.

Activity responses

Activity 1 response

- Aged Rights Advocacy Service (ARAS).
- Aged Care Act 1997 (Representative).
- Equal Opportunities Act 1986 (Representative).
- Medical Practice (Doctor).
- Lawyer.
- Guardianship Board.

Activity 2 response

This task will vary according to the State in which you live.

Activity 3 response

- Who should attend? Who is the decision-maker? Where will you meet? What date? Venue? Give appropriate notice.
- Determine issues to be discussed.
- Find information, eg: referral letters from medical practitioner or others.
- Organise equipment, eg: TV, projector, computer.
- Ensure equipment is in working order and set up prior to meeting.
- Ensure professional presentation.
- Keep client informed of proceedings and outcomes.

Activity 4 response

- Inform the client and explain why you cannot represent them.
- Inform the supervisor.
- Help find another advocate.
- Agree to act as an advocate for some issues that do not compromise confidentiality/loyalty.
- Be aware of any family conflict.
- Refrain from personalising issues.

Define the representative role and conditions of representation (1738)

In this publication, we consider the meaning of advocacy and representation through:

- advancing the interests of the community via decision-forming and decision-making groups and forums
- taking action to influence decision-making processes
- developing and promoting the community services industry through public forums.

Advocacy

Advocacy can be viewed as working with or representing an individual or group with an aim to upholding their rights. The advocate can either represent the person/s or provide support and encouragement as a client advocates for themselves. It is important to understand that advocacy is about taking a side, rather than mediating between two or more parties.

Representation

In the context of advocacy, representation refers the situation where the interests of one party are promoted by another. In this publication, we are exploring representation in terms of group situations. This can, however, provide outcomes which impact on individuals and vice versa.

Activity 1

Look in recent newspapers or in other media reports for examples of advocacy and representation for a disadvantaged group or supporting a cause. Your findings may include reports about recent activity by global advocacy groups such as Greenpeace, United Nations Organisation (UNO), World Health Organisation (WHO).

When working in an advocacy role, there are many factors to consider and aims can be met through a range of strategies. Because advocacy is about taking sides and supporting, there are some specific factors to be considered. These include having:

- a mandate to represent the group, ie: a specific request by the group
- professional commitment, ie: you are the appropriate person to act on the group's behalf due to your job role, your membership of an appropriate community committee, or in your position as a volunteer.
- personal commitment to the cause and a belief in what you are doing.

Conditions of representation

The conditions of representation set the parameters under which you will be working.

Example 1:

A worker from a state government organisation, working on a community networking committee which is seeking to represent a group of disadvantaged people from a local community to the council/shire in which they are living, will need to consider the:

- State government policies and procedures as related to own organisation
- community networking group's frame of reference
- protocols from the local government organisation.

These aspects will impact on the planning process and potential outcomes. Supporting the group to make its own representation to the local government may be the chosen process.

Activity 2

Imagine you are working for a community organisation which is partially funded through a Commonwealth Government grant. The funding agreement requires clear demonstration of community collaboration.

You also attend a community networking group in your local area which has been asked to provide support to a group that is lobbying local government for increased facilities, eg:

- a youth group lobbying for more recreational facilities
- a group of older people wanting increased activities linked to the mobile library service
- a carers group wanting better community transport.

The networking group meet to discuss the action and potential issues.

Consider the following in terms of your own position, the networking group and that of the party being represented:

- Authorisation, accountability and protocol, ie: who has responsibility and to whom are they responsible?
- Terms of reference, eg: who will provide resources?
- Scope, scale and parameters, eg: is the proposed representation too extensive? Does it fit into the organisation's position on the issue?
- Consultation and delegations, eg: who will be a part of the delegation?
- Reporting and accountability, eg: are there funding body requirements? Is there a service agreement? What are the relevant organisation policies and procedures?

Having explored these points, let's look at some more.

Existing community structures, systems, networks, processes

While setting up your advocacy project, ask yourself questions to ensure that all existing community structures, systems, networks and processes are being appropriately addressed. Individuals and organisations prepared to act as allies will strengthen the outcomes of the project. Using existing community structures and systems will build strong relationships and save on resources.

If you are unsure of the relationships between the tiers of government in Australia, be sure to review your knowledge through some research. There are useful websites and resource books, such as the Law Handbook relevant to your state or territory.

Resources

What resources are available? Will you need to source more? The existing community structures, systems, networks and processes may have resources that can be accessed in order to avoid duplication.

Role of key people

Key people are allies who can support the whole process and influence outcomes. Frequently, the support given by key people can streamline the whole project. Consider the following points:

- Find the key people in your local area – these may be from formal or informal groups.
- Develop relationships through networking.
- Know the appropriate protocols, eg: how to contact local members of parliament and local government representatives.
- Learn about how the community works and who has the power in terms of influence and decision-making.
- Explore how your representation have the most impact.

Activity 3

Think about your own organisation or the part of the community sector you work in or are planning to work in. When working on a representation role consider:

- Development of an industry position. How is this defined? Check the principles of the organisation. What stand is taken on specific issues that may impact on the representation?
- Requirements of industry mechanisms. What are the protocols of the industry? Are there other organisations/groups to be considered, eg: unions, interest groups?

Read through articles, reports and publications that give examples of community advocacy projects. Examples are available on organisation specific websites and in books such as Nash, A 2001, *People.dot.Community: a resource for effective community activism*, Villamanta Legal Service, Geelong, Vic.

Examples of representation

Outlined following are some examples of representation.

- Advancing the interests of the community through decision-making forums.

  Example 2:

  Represent groups at local government meetings. The case will be stronger when supported by community input, eg: from surveys, public meetings and focus group discussions.

- Taking action to influence decision-making processes.

  Example 3:

  Support individuals and groups through training and mentoring to increase knowledge and build confidence.

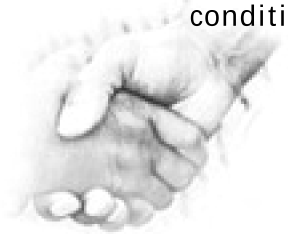
  This promotes and fosters an environment where local communities and groups are empowered to affect positive changes in their environment.

- Developing and promoting the interests of the community services industry in a wide range of public forums.

  Example 4:

  Raise the profile of community services by increasing awareness of services through community education programs.

In this publication we have explored advocacy through representation and some conditions of representation.



Activity responses

Activity 1 response

Possible examples:

- A Disability Services organisation/peak body lobbying for increased housing opportunities for people with specific types of disability.
- Global campaigns to save/protect endangered animals.

You may find is useful to discuss your reading with other students or with your facilitator.

Activity 2 response

In regards to each of the points, you may have thought of the following:

- Authorisation, accountability and protocol

  You will need to ask some questions here, eg: who is authorised to make decisions in terms of policy, finance and other aspects of the project? Community networking groups are often a group of representatives from a range of organisations and agencies. There may be an agreement already in place, otherwise it will be necessary to set up a suitable protocol with another organisation/s.

- Terms of reference

  Often these will be established in networking groups. One of the first steps will be checking if representing the local community group fits in with these.

- Scope, scale and parameters

  A project such as representation of another group may be beyond the scope, scale and parameters of the community networking group. If so, this could be added into the agreement with organisation which has been approached regarding authorisation, accountability and protocol.

- Consultation and delegations

  These will be conducted according to established protocols.

- Reporting and accountability

  This will take place according to agreements and protocols and would include all organisations/groups which are involved.

Activity 3 response

Responses will vary. You may find it useful to discuss this activity with other students, your colleagues or your facilitator.

Participate in representation and decision-making forums (1739)

In this publication, we look at participating in representation and other forums as a strategy for advocacy and upholding the rights and interests of groups and individuals. The specific skills and knowledge considered are:

- identifying relevant interests and concerns, while taking organisation positions and policies into account
- creating and responding to opportunities to represent relevant interests
- participating in a range of forums which aim to influence and make decisions
- demonstrating effective representation of individual and group concerns and interests within the organisation, the community and the community services industry.

Identifying relevant interests and concerns

The first step is to make sure that you know about the group and its purpose in order to ensure that you are able to work within the relevant parameters, ie: the group vision, ethics, aims and objectives. It is then important to find out about other stakeholders, eg:

- clients (if the group or organisation provides a service)
- funding bodies
- interested community members.

Know the position of organisations that are, or could potentially be involved. How does your strategy fit within the organisation's principles? Its vision, aims, objectives, policies and protocols will be developed around these. Ensure that all relevant policies of organisations are considered.

Some specific strategies for creating and responding to opportunities to represent relevant interests include the following:

- Holding events, eg: community education, community consultation and in some situations, fundraising events.
- Joining committees – belonging to various committees can give the opportunity to build relationships and alliances, to be involved in influencing decision-forming and decision-making.
- Making public presentations to raise awareness through community education.
- Being involved in policy development with specific organisations, or seeking to influence public policy and legislation. This is also known as systems advocacy.
- Holding or attending special meetings/delegations, eg: to lobby decision-makers within government and the community.

Participating in a range of forums

Groups have different roles in influencing the forming and making of decisions.

Some skills that members need include:

- lobbying decision-makers in the community and government
- persuasiveness
- being able to support/argue a position
- negotiating for outcomes
- writing, eg: submissions to parliamentary committees or as a part of a community consultation.

Example 1:

You may influence decision-forming and/or making by being involved in the consultation process which occurs prior to legislation or policy being developed.

It is important to ensure that consultation is effective. Public participation is viewed as a part of government decision-making, and ensuring that there is involvement is very important. There is a better chance of influencing legislation before it is passed by parliament and this is done through active involvement in the consultation phase.

Use the skills outlined above. Find out the rules for the wording and presentation of petitions. The parliamentary groups and processes involved in decision-forming and decision-making have specific protocols which, if not adhered to, will impact on and sometimes nullify the participation.

(Duffy, B 2001 *Working the system – A guide for citizens, consumers and communities*, Public Interest Advocacy Centre, Sydney, NSW).

On a local level, not all community groups have decision-making powers. Community networking groups, for example, are often made up of representatives from diverse organisations with aims of sharing ideas and support. On the other hand, a coalition with similar industry positions may be able to share ideas and support one another and also contribute to consultation processes and lobby for change.

Lobbying

This is usually conducted by delegations. It can be powerful, however ensure that it is planned. Choose your strategy and write up the main points.

The delegation needs to comprise of people who are most suited to representing the specific issue. Make a time for the group to meet so that decisions are made about who will present which points and in which order. Ask permission first and then have a previously appointed person take notes during the delegation. It is useful to have a typed copy of your notes (with details of the delegation, date and person/s to whom it is being presented) to leave after the meeting. For records and future reference, also write up the results and consider sending a thankyou letter.

(Duffy, B 2001)

Activity 1

Think of the groups you are involved in. What are their main functions in terms of influencing, decision-forming and decision-making? Research some ways that you can extend your participation in these types of groups.

Demonstrating effective representation

Whether you are involved in representing a special needs group in the community or participating in industry participative roles, there will be planning to be done. As with all planning processes, you will look at using a model. You may have a planning process that you usually use. If not, start by asking, Who? What? How? When? Where?

Who are you representing?

Consider the client/client group – this may be a formal or informal group, an organisation set up to support a special needs group.

Who are the power brokers and decision makers in the community?

These may be the individuals and groups you will be seeking to influence.

What is the issue? What outcome/s does the group want to achieve?

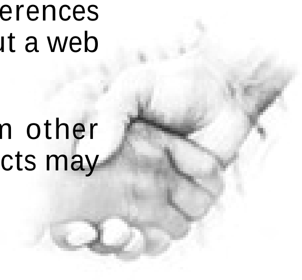
The answer to these questions will lead into the consideration of project outcomes and goal-setting in order to meet that aim.

How, when and were?

Develop an action plan involving a range of steps with timelines to give a clear focus.

If you haven't worked on project planning previously, you'll need to check references that focus on planning. There are many useful website you can access – carry out a web search using 'action planning' as your key words.

Another useful tool is to research other projects. You can learn a lot from other strategies and evaluations. Remember, however, that what works for some projects may not work for yours and vice versa.



Other considerations

Resources

What is available? What else do you need? Availability of required resources impacts on when you can actually get started. Talk to the group and other stakeholders. Explore what resources are available that you can borrow or share. Consider funding applications.

Publicity and media

A very important aspect of your planning involves publicity and the media. Your group will need to consider this in terms of resource allocation and protocols. It is important to agree on protocols for approaching and responding to the media. You may wish to appoint a specific spokesperson for the group.

Monitoring and evaluation

Both are crucial to the success of the project. Monitoring is essential to ensure that longer-running projects remain focused on the projected outcomes.

Evaluation can be used throughout the project to look at various strategies.

> Example 2:
>
> When holding public meetings and events, how well were they planned and implemented? Did they effectively contribute to meeting the goals and projected outcomes of the overall project?

Activity 2

Research a report on an advocacy project where representation was one of the strategies used. Such reports are available on the internet or in books such as *Working the system – A guide for citizens, consumers and communities* (Duffy, B 2001).

Summarise your findings below.

Presentations

When representing a group or an individual it may be necessary to give a presentation of information at a public meeting or other group session. You may need to do this to ensure that information is delivered to a group of people in an effective and efficient manner. In some instances a presentation could form part of a lobbying delegation.

Always make sure that the strategy you choose will best represent the group's interests in an up-to-date and interesting format.

Some points to keep in mind:

- Know your topic.
- Keep the content relevant and comprehensive – you don't want to turn your presentation into a lengthy lecture. On the other hand, you need to ensure that all information is included.
- Always check to see if the mode of delivery is appropriate.

Example 3:

If the group is accustomed to using technology, a PowerPoint presentation may be the best option. Ask the people to whom you are presenting if such a presentation is suitable. You also need to make sure that the venue has the required equipment available, ie: a laptop computer and data projector, and that there is an appropriate area to project the image, such as a screen or clean, light coloured expanse of wall.

- It is a good idea to do a practice run of the whole presentation before presenting it to your audience. Check for accuracy and timing, and how it sounds when spoken aloud rather than just read off the sheet/screen.
- If you are not confident about giving presentations, find someone who is. The person who writes the content isn't always the one who prepares it for presentation, nor the one who presents it on the day. Ensure that you have the person with the best skills involved in each part of the presentation process.
- In some situations, one person needs to do everything from planning through to presenting. If this is you and you are not confident with your presentation skills, it may be useful to attend a training session. Remember that you are working for your client and need to present their case in the best possible manner.

In this publication we have looked at opportunities for group participation and representation.

Activity responses

Activity 1 response

This activity is based on personal experience, so responses will vary. It has been included to encourage personal reflection on group participation.

Activity 2 response

This optional research is designed to expand your knowledge on opportunities for involvement in influencing, decision-forming and decision-making groups.

Opportunities for communicating the needs of clients (0814)

In order to develop effective information strategies to keep your clients informed and to ensure ongoing consultation with them, the questions below may need to be considered.

- What forms of communication are available?
- Who wants the information?
- What is the purpose of the communication?
- Is the communication for the individual, group, organisation, media?
- How can you communicate most effectively?
- What are the barriers to communication? For example, lack of access to electronic media, cultural differences, geographical considerations.
- Are the current communication processes effective?
- How can they be improved?

You will need to ensure that the information you provide, both external and internal, is thorough in what it communicates, appropriate in terms of language levels and the nature of information provided, clear and concise, well presented, promotes the objectives of the organisation.

It is important to know what you are talking about. You can probably think of several people who sound good but you can soon tell when they are cleverly covering up their lack of knowledge by employing certain strategies! So, make sure that you have the necessary information at your finger-tips. You will also need to make sure that you know who your audience is so that you can make decisions about appropriate information dissemination strategies.

All parties involved need to be informed of the processes that have been employed to disseminate information. If procedures have been made clear, there should be no hindrance to implementation.

However, be aware that there may be some hindrances in the form of:

- lack of clarity regarding who is responsible
- use of inappropriate communication channel

- poor understanding of communicated information
- poor feedback regarding a message sent or received
- lack of courtesy or respect for the knowledge and skills of the receiver
- contradictory messages from other sources
- cultural differences that are not taken into account
- poor presentation
- inappropriate timing.

You will know if your information dissemination and opportunities for communication are effective because:

- channels are open and operational
- you are diligent in monitoring what is happening
- you are diligent in providing opportunities for the dissemination of this information.

Publicity and promotion

The ways in which information is presented may be in printed or in electronic form and should support easy access by the consumer. It may be distributed through a range of community outlets or exchanged through conferences, workshops, seminars, meetings, letter box drops, mail outs. One of the most useful ways of publishing information is through an organisational newsletter.

Example 1:

National Public Health Partnership News

Aboriginal Health Network News

50 Something (formerly COTA News)

The Chronicle, Bulletin of the Northern Territory Chronic Diseases Network.

Many organisations now use information technology to provide information through the development of a web site that provides access to organisational databases. Many State and Federal Government departments have a web site with a variety of links and search facilities for people to access relevant resource information. A well planned web site can be used to publish information and promote the services of an organisation.

Resource directories are another way in which organisations may promote access to resources. A resource directory is a useful tool for community service organisations to publish information about their services and provide access to people who may need information about what resources are available to them in the community.

Organisations may use radio, live productions and other media to promote services to all relevant groups.

Working with the media

Many organisations now make extensive use of the media in order to keep in touch with their community and to enable the community to remain informed about activities, programs and resources. Your peak body may also have policies and procedures in place that determine who speaks to the media and what they should say.

A way of gaining recognition and support is for organisations to appoint and train certain people to address public meetings and respond to media requests. Staff should be well informed about the purpose and objectives of their organisation and able to articulate these in an attractive and informative manner. Your organisation should also consider who may be the most appropriate person to develop their public relations and speaking skills. There are many media skills training courses available that help people develop and extend their media skills. Apart from speaking in public and responding to requests from journalists, spokespersons may be interviewed on local radio or by journalists on any number of issues such as:

- initiating a new or interesting project or program
- answering enquiries about a specific issue
- inviting media people to a launch of a new program or facility
- writing press articles about issues of interest
- writing advertisements to recruit research or consumer participation in a program.

Mass media presents the opportunity to communicate to large numbers of people and to focus on specific groups of people. Communication on mass is vastly different from other forms of communication, in that it has the capability of reaching thousands of people who are not related to the sender.

It relies on technology to quickly distribute messages to diverse audiences who are often unknown to each other. It is accessible to many people even though they may choose to ignore the opportunity. Messages may be censored by decision-makers. However, unlike one-to-one communication, it produces very little response to its senders.

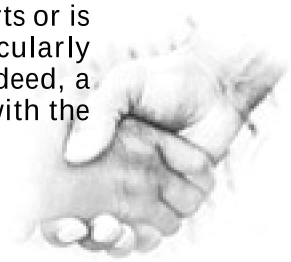
A well-focused mass media campaign, educational program or live-theatre production has the potential to contribute successfully to community education and the awareness of a specific issue. Let us take the issue of child abuse as an example.

Example 2:

Mass media may:

- put the matter on the public agenda, thereby raising awareness
- give information about the current state and proposed action plans, policy development
- develop a public consciousness of the issue.

Campaigns, and other forms of media education and entertainment (eg: television programs, film and live productions), may be targeted at all families with a view to encouraging positive attitudes towards children and stopping abuse before it starts or is even considered (primary prevention). Groups of people identified as particularly susceptible to abusive behaviour may be targeted (secondary prevention). Indeed, a campaign or program may target families in which abuse has already occurred with the intention of preventing recurrence of the abuse (tertiary prevention).



On the limiting side, mass media has little effect on shifting attitudes and beliefs, and in giving information that is complex. It is also limited in changing behaviour without accompanying strategies such as community education and support programs.

A media campaign can only be successful when it is integrated into a consistent systematic approach that encompasses all aspects of the issue being addressed. The mass approach must be supported by a hands-on grass roots approach if behaviour changes are to take place. Several strategies supporting prevention of child abuse are simultaneously put into action:

- emphasising the legal requirements, eg: mandated notification
- encouraging community members to report incidents
- social disapproval – abuse of power and trust
- consequences – the impact of abuse on individual development
- making help available and accessible.

Prevention campaigns

Working together journalists and advocates can strike a note that thousands will hear and respond to if the campaign is well coordinated.

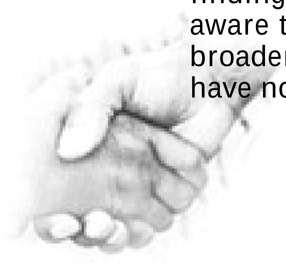
Press releases have been said to be one of the most important primary sources of media news stories. Some journalists spend much of their time rewording and reorganising press releases and creating stories from written information provided to them by individuals, groups, and organisations. Thus, information provided to media that sheds light on an issue such as child abuse, may occur in an organised manner through well-researched and planned mass media education and prevention campaigns undertaken by systems advocates. Alternatively, press releases, opinion pieces, and letters to newspapers focusing on current cases or significant issues or events, will be a more informal means of providing information.

The journalist holds a powerful position in being able to influence the minds of the public and to sway public opinion. Similarly, public opinion may be used to influence governments through a well developed media campaign. In this role the journalist becomes an advocate. A partnership that is developed with a fair-minded and well placed journalist can be extremely beneficial to the systems advocate.

Writing a media release

A media release is an outline, written by you, of the issue that you are wanting the media to take up. The most common type of release reads as though it is a newspaper article and may include direct quotes from people who have something of relevance to say about the issue. Make your most important points first, as your release may be edited from the bottom up.

Writing a release involves getting across what you want to say in a succinct and interesting way whilst covering the matter thoroughly and accurately. You will also need to stimulate the media's interest in getting attention for your issue. This may mean finding a small group of people who have experienced the issue to tell their story. Be aware that this may focus the public attention on the individual/s rather than on the broader issue, and in doing so, may divert attention from your original aim. You may have noticed this scenario occurring in some TV current affairs programs.



Here are some tips on writing that may help you with a media release:

- Do your research, take notes, then put it aside for a while. Your mind will churn things over without you being aware.
- Write and write and write. Do not edit. Just write all the things that you are thinking of.
- Edit your writing. What is repetitious? What is a waste of words? What does not flow with a logical sequence? What jargon is being used? What can you say more clearly and succinctly? Are your sentences too long? Make sure your sentences are no longer than 35 words.
- Keep it short and simple (KISS). Do not put too many thoughts into the one sentence.
- Be yourself when you write. Do not try to use bureaucratic and ambiguous language.
- Refer to your dictionary and thesaurus.

How to make the media work for you

The following checklist will help you to formulate a basic plan whenever you want to approach the media:

- Nominate a project or policy you want to announce. Keep it simple, don't try to cover every aspect in one media hit.
- Identify objectives. You may wish to raise the profile of your organisation, service, individual.
- Identify your target media. Whom do you hope to reach via your publicity and promotional activities? What papers/journals do they read? Where do they go in their daily lives? What radio shows do they listen to? What TV programs do they watch? Include demographic groups (eg: age, gender, income), government and industry targets. Where are they located? You will need more than one version of your story if you have a variety of target markets.
- Write media release. Indicate date and if photographs are available. (Make sure they are top quality.)
- Make sure contact details are clearly visible. Use only one side.
- Send media release by fax or email and indicate if it has been sent by more than one method.
- Practise for interviews (if on radio talk-back, you may get some curly questions).
- Make sure that your spokesperson is available, no matter what.
- Make sure that all relevant staff are informed of the correct responses to media enquiries.
- Follow-up your contact by phone within 24 hours.
- Be patient. Success is not instantaneous.
- Thank the journalist by phone or email after publication.

To build awareness of your service you may want to:

- develop champions, ie: well known public people who support your cause
- monitor the press for opportunities to respond to reported issues that allow you to talk about your cause
- make use of 'letters to the editor', it is difficult to quote you out of context!

If you hold a press conference the media may not show up unless you have something compelling to say. You are advised to allow three months for a campaign in order to develop your media relationships if your campaign is to be successful.

In this publication we have explored opportunities for communicating through publicity, promotion and working with the media.

Use community consultation in decision-making processes (1387)

This publication focuses on recognising the importance of community consultation in the process of developing and implementing community programs. When developing a community program that will initiate change, community consultation will ensure that:

- the need for the program relevance to be fully understood by members of the community
- the type of program is relevant to and owned by community members
- community members are encouraged to present their own views and opinions in relation to the program
- the program is supported by members of the community through participation
- the goals and strategies of the program will be achieved
- community members are provided with the opportunity to have input into the planning and development of strategies and action to initiate the program
- community members are aware of the benefits they will receive from the program.

Community consultation is undertaken to ensure community members are provided the opportunity to have input into the planning and development of the program, ie: goals and also to ensure that the program itself will gain community support through participation.

This will assist in establishing goals that are directly relevant to and easily understood by members of the community who will participate in the program. The most appropriate community consultation strategies to be used in establishing goals include conducting meetings, seminars, workshops or other forums, undertaking interviews or analysing the results of written surveys such as questionnaires.

A range of decisions will need to be made when planning and developing your community program. The methods of decision-making will vary depending upon the decision to be made and the methods involved in making the decision. When a group of individuals are involved in decision-making, a consensus or majority vote is generally selected as the method of decision-making. Regardless of which decision making process is adopted, it is important that community members are provided the opportunity to participate in the process.

The decision-making process

The decision-making process involves a number of steps including:

1. Identifying the issue. This involves clearly defining the problem or clarifying the issue on which the decision must be made.
2. Gathering all relevant information associated with the issue. This may include information associated with possible options to decide upon.
3. Returning to the aims and goals of the program and comparing the information to these objectives and possible outcomes.
4. Identify possible decisions or options available.
5. Evaluating each possible decision or option against the aims, goals and outcomes. This may involve weighing up the positives and negatives and short and long-term consequences for each possible option.
6. Making the decision either by majority vote or consensus. Ultimately, the aim is to select the option that provides the greatest benefit from the cost or effort invested.
7. Committing to the decision and implementing it. Once the decision has been made, all individuals involved should focus on fulfilling action associated with this decision and ensuring this action is implemented appropriately.

Community based programs can involve gathering input from a wide range of people which means it may not be possible for everyone to have input into every decision. For this to happen, it would mean regularly gathering the group of people together to make decisions. When working with community members it is often more efficient to have smaller decisions delegated to individuals, subgroups such as a reference group or committee.

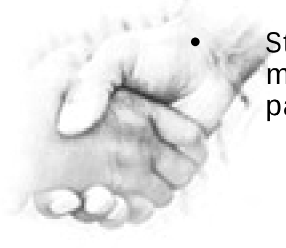
Any person who has been delegated the role of making decisions must fully understand the importance of the role including:

- understanding the relationship it has to the aims and objectives of the project in terms of fulfilling community needs
- confidentiality and group norms
- the importance of feeding information (facts) back to the community when appropriate.

If every participant is clear about what decisions should be made in what circumstances, the program should be able to progress smoothly, without continual delays caused by holding regular or unforeseen decision-making meetings. The cost, in terms of time and effort invested to organise these meetings, may far outweigh the benefits generated from making the decision itself. This is particularly apparent when the program is staffed by a coordinator and volunteers. The coordinator’s time is limited and needs to be used effectively and efficiently.

When people gather at a meeting, strategies that can be used to assist them with sharing information and major decision-making, eg: policy development, funding arrangements or specific program goals, include:

- Receiving a presentation from one individual or professional who is knowledgeable in a specific area. This individual can then provide information to others to assist them in making their decision.
- Structured discussion – this may involve having several individuals (generally a maximum of six) presenting varying facts that may be opposing ideas on a particular issue to assist others present with making an informed decision.



- Discussion groups or workshops – this allows a small group of individuals to discuss ideas, thoughts and opinions in relation to a specific issue. The information discussed or outcomes may then be presented back to those present at a meeting. In general, discussion groups or workshops will provide recommendations for further action that will assist in decision-making.
- Brainstorming – this strategy encourages all present to generate a range of ideas associated with the issue of a decision to be made. The aim of brainstorming is to encourage each person to put forward their own views and thoughts prior to initiating any discussion.

Working groups

To facilitate decision-making in all areas of your program, you may need to develop one or more working groups. The types of groups you may need to establish include:

- Focus groups – focus groups are a collection of experts or individuals with an area of interest, who are brought together to address a specific issue of concern. Focus groups encourage community participation by allowing the individual to use their area of expertise to the benefit of the broader community. The role of a focus group is to address specific community issues and then report this information to the community for action.
- Reference groups – these consist of a broad range of community representatives, key people and stakeholders. When establishing a reference group, the aim is to have representatives from all areas of the community that together hold a broad range of skills and knowledge. The role of the reference group is to represent the community as a whole.
- Program committee – this committee should include a range of community members responsible for overseeing the whole of the program. The role of the program committee is to plan, develop, implement and evaluate the community program.
- In doing this, they must make decisions, encourage community participation, promote cooperation between organisations and ensure that the needs and interests of the community are fulfilled. In making decisions, the program committee may ask for support or information from the reference groups, focus groups or from any other interested community members.
- Other committees – a range of other committees may also need to be developed to ensure the program is carefully planned and effectively implemented. These committees are often called ‘project committees’ or sub-committees. Programs will often have several project committees formed and each committee is responsible for one element of the overall program, eg: the program that aims to reduce the incidence of diabetes among rural Aboriginal people may form a project committee to plan and implement cooking workshops and another project committee to plan and implement exercise classes.

Each of these groups will be formed with a specific role to play in planning, developing and implementing your community program. In general, these groups will make decisions by attending a meeting and deciding upon issues by a majority or consensus vote. Often the group members will be offering their time as a part of another job role or as a volunteer. For this reason, meetings need to be well organised and facilitated to use the time effectively and efficiently.

Conducting a meeting

All areas of community work may involve participation in different meetings. Meetings are generally held on a regular basis or for a specific reason and are often centred on making decisions. Meetings may involve all members of the community or may be held by small groups.

During the meeting, several decisions may need to be made. A process for decision making should be agreed upon prior to the meeting commencing. Most meetings rely on decisions being made by majority or consensus votes, after all opinions have been presented and seconded by independent people. When all possible opinions have been presented and a discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of each opinion has been completed, voting will then take place to make a decision.

When the decision to be made is complex, the responsibility for making the decision may be referred elsewhere to another committee or group. This committee or sub-group will then thoroughly explore the options available and present their findings at a later meeting.

While all individuals present at the meeting are encouraged to have input, the most important role is held by the Chairperson who is responsible for the overall success of the meeting. In your role of planning, developing and implementing a community program, it is likely you will initially find yourself in the role of a Chairperson. The Chairperson requires a high level of interpersonal skills to fulfil the role effectively. These skills should be used by the Chairperson to ensure:

- an agenda is distributed prior to the meeting
- having asked if there are any items to be added to the agenda, the meeting runs according to the agenda
- all present have equal opportunities for input
- decisions are made and action is taken
- situations of conflict are prevented or resolved
- that on completion of the meeting, those present feel they have satisfactorily contributed
- that discussion is kept to the point
- that a few individuals do not dominate discussions
- the events of the meeting are clarified to ensure everyone is clear about what is happening and the information provided
- that they remain neutral and treat all participants equally
- that the atmosphere remains friendly and open
- procedures are followed
- that decisions are centred around the aims and goals of the meeting and the overall program.

When first planning your community program, you may find that you need to hold a range of different meetings. Each of these meetings will have its own specific purpose and should assist in fulfilling the overall aims and goals of the program itself.

Remember that while initially you may need to take on the role of Chairperson yourself, the aim of community work is to hand ownership and responsibility back to community members. Therefore when the appropriate time comes, it may be necessary for you to hand the role of Chairperson over to an appropriate community member.

Facilitating group work

All areas of community work rely heavily on working in groups. For a group of people to work together effectively, they need to work as a team, supporting each other and focusing on mutual goals and objectives. A broad range of interpersonal skills is required to ensure that group work is effective.

The effectiveness of the group will depend on a number of things, including:

- all members of the group having common objectives and a common focus
- the personalities of the individuals within the group and related communication strategies
- the structure of the group including decision-making processes – if one individual is nominated as a group leader, their role needs to be respected by other group members
- adhering to group procedures and maintaining group norms
- the tasks and actions expected of the group – it is important that members of the group have the skills and abilities required to complete the tasks expected of the group
- the willingness of group members to participate – the work of the group should be shared among team members rather than the onus being placed on just a few individuals
- all members of the group being treated equally – this includes allowing each member of the group to have the opportunity to present their own thoughts, opinions and beliefs.

All work that involves participation by a broad range of people presents the possibility for conflicts to arise. Should any situations of conflict arise, it is essential that a broad range of interpersonal skills is used to minimise the conflict and find a suitable resolution.

Should a conflict arise, the degree of conflict will be dependent upon the nature of the issue, size of the issue and personality of those involved. All situations of conflict should be approached positively with the aim of establishing an effective resolution.

Strategies that may be used for positive conflict resolution include:

- aiming to result in a satisfactory resolution for all parties – this will involve using negotiation skills effectively
- recognising and understanding the motivation behind the behaviour of each party involved in the conflict, so that each feels valued
- trying to identify alternative solutions that may remove the issue of conflict from the group altogether.

In this publication we have considered community consultation in decision-making and related strategies.

Achieving change in government policy (0816)

Whatever your involvement in advocacy may be, you will need a range of skills in furthering the cause you are representing. Because advocacy involves creating a change in the balance of power structures, conflict will possibly be an element in creating change. No matter what avenues you may pursue, it is highly likely that you will have to do some negotiating or lobbying along the way.

Negotiation

Negotiation is a discussion between two or more people about the terms of a transaction or agreement. In order to achieve optimum success with negotiation processes, each party must be able to utilise communication strategies in order to exchange information and to establish trust and confidence.

Your communication skills that will be employed in negotiation include listening, questioning, speaking, non-verbal communication. Specific steps that you can use in your negotiations include:

- Set goals:
  - state your needs clearly and concisely
  - know what you would like to happen as a result of the negotiation.
- Be prepared:
  - research and use factual information to support your case
  - find out about the other person's point of view
  - consider what you are prepared to compromise on.
- Recognise your fears around the issue:
  - present the case using 'I' statements to put across your point of view
  - don't let your emotions take charge, try to keep your language objective.
- Listen to the other's point of view:
  - use active listening skills
  - be prepared to see where they are coming from

- do not interrupt
- avoid making inflammatory remarks, or being patronising.

- Focus on the problem, not the person:
  - try to confine your anger to the actual issues.
- Make a commitment to the basic social justice principles that are at stake in this matter.

Remember, people's personal styles influence the way in which they negotiate. Some personal styles make it difficult for the other person to understand the issues and needs involved.

Lobbying

The word 'lobbyist' comes from a lobby that is the public area used for interviews between members of the British House of Commons and their clientele. Lobbying is really another word for influencing some other person in an attempt to get them to do what you want. Usually lobbying is thought of as being part of an organised plan that is designed to put persistent pressure on another party with the intention of getting them to accept your demands.

There are many different ways of going about lobbying, so you will need to give some thought to what strategies will be most effective for you. Letters? Petitions perhaps? Meetings?

Letter writing campaigns can be most useful to demonstrate a large base of support. People should be encouraged to write their own words although you may urge them to consider including a few basic points. If numbers of people are prepared to sit down and write a letter, then obviously the issue is of importance to them.

Petitions do not have the same influence as letters. Politicians who are usually the target of petitions, realise that people who sign do not always think carefully about the issue before they do so and therefore petitions are not always a great indication of public opinion. However, they can be useful in raising public awareness of the matter.

Pressure that is applied from more than one direction is likely to be more successful. Attracting a diverse range of people is important as it indicates that the issue is broadly based and not an isolated concern. Try to attract people who are seen as significant and credible by those whom you are wanting to lobby. If you are going to lobby a Minister, then it is useful to get to know who their advisers are and to spend some time with them discussing your concerns.

Lobbying is hard work. It takes time and energy to find the influential people and convince them of your concerns. Make sure that you use the skills and resources of those organisations that are experienced in these activities and that have already established effective networks.

There are several tips that a lobbyist may consider:

- Work out whether your issue is a State or Federal matter.
- The best time to see a Minister is in the morning early in the sitting period.
- Fax or send a brief appointment letter followed by a phone call.
- Research your issue thoroughly and gather background information about the Minister's portfolio.
- Put your main points on a one page handout.
- Leave supporting documents for perusal after you leave.
- If possible, identify a media angle that will give the Minister the opportunity to effectively raise the issue.
- Follow-up the meeting with a letter summarising the outcomes of the meeting.
- Keep in contact with the Minister's staff.

All peak bodies will have a person who speaks on behalf of the organisations, agencies and individuals they represent.

Besides considering the previous points, these spokespersons will:

- define objectives precisely and decide beforehand what compromises they will be prepared to make
- identify supports in Parliament and prepare to mobilise supporters if necessary
- maintain and update phone, fax, email, mailing lists
- ensure that there are sufficient resources to deliver the objective
- deliver the message concisely and confidently
- arrange for supporters to write in their own words to Parliamentarians
- maintain honesty, credibility and humour throughout discussions.

Obtaining change in government policy

Now that we have discussed ways to identify issues of concern within the broader rights and needs of the general community and we have thought about strategies that advocates may implement to effect change, let's consider and apply it to a specific example.

Example:

Consider Home and Community Care (HACC) programs in which:

- there is inadequate provision of services to remain at home
- the target group are low level care older people living at home
- where needs are basic household help.

Follow on with:

- how these needs have been identified
- the extent of the problem
- how relaxed government policy is
- supporting programs
- difficulties in the current policy
- what options can be presented to address changes in policy.

Strategies that may be employed to get change in government policy are encompassed in three stages:

The government needs to recognise that there is a problem

To do this, evidence must be provided that is based on good research methodologies and a range of information provided by service providers and users in the form of numbers of letters, phone calls, meeting feedback etc.

Options are provided that are realistic and feasible

When declaring that more funding is needed for the HACC programs, the peak body will draw up budgets with incremental increases over the next five years rather than asking for a large amount as a one-off.

There may be examination of efficiencies in the use of current resources with a view to finding savings that can be diverted to this cause. Questions that could be asked include whether:

- there is equitable distribution of resources
- there is efficient use of resources
- the program is meeting its original aim of providing for low level home care
- hospital patients who are currently taking up resources can remain in hospital for a longer period with other types of rehabilitative care
- a user pays system can be devised.

Advocacy strategies

The issues of HACC funding are highlighted in newsletters, letters to the editor, special reports to Parliament and public meetings.

Special inquiries may be undertaken which provide an opportunity for discussion of issues – Senate inquiries, Productivity Commission, government evaluations.

The media strategy involves highlighting the issues through speaking to journalists, sending out press releases, publicising copies of reports, case studies, eg:

- Direct lobbying (face-to-face and letters) to Ministers, advisers and senior public servants about the issue. Council on the Ageing (COTA) National Executive Director and other COTA representatives spend a lot of time in Canberra building relationships with government to further their aims.
- Targeting backbenchers, Senators, Opposition so that they will apply pressure to parliamentary decision-makers. The Senate has an important role in final policy decisions. It is important to influence the Opposition in the event of a change of government.
- Holding community campaigns that involve letter writing, visits to local MPs, holding a special meeting or conference on the issues and inviting Ministers and other government officials to attend and speak.
- Encouraging older people to write to their local Minister or Prime Minister relating their specific experience regarding this problem.
- Representation on committees. The government may establish a committee to review particular policy issues. Peak bodies are usually represented on a wide range of government committees.
- Budget submission. COTA develops a submission each year for the Federal budget – HACC is a major area for policy recommendations.

Activity 1

Identify an issue in a recent media article which demonstrates how an individual or group is disempowered by actual/proposed government policy or by an organisation. For example, an older person who is on a long waiting list for hospital for elective surgery.

Decide whether you would use negotiation, lobbying or a combination of the two and formulate a strategy to support the person.

Activity 1 response

Though no specific sample answer can be given, you may have found that using a combination of strategies is likely to provide optimum effect.

Adhere to cross-cultural communication protocols (1806)

We will look at cross-cultural communication and how to go about achieving this effectively.

Cross-cultural communication requires you to be able to identify communication issues and address these issues so that you develop and maintain effective relationships. There are cultural differences that must be understood before meaningful and respectful dialogue can proceed between people from different cultures. Whilst it is important that each culture gains an understanding of the others' beliefs and behaviours, it is equally important that they guard against accepting their own behaviour as the norm and the standard to which everyone must apply. A range of communication strategies are employed to ensure understanding. When working in a cross-cultural context, it is also essential to identify any communication strategies that are ineffective and inappropriate, so that these strategies can be remodelled to meet service needs.

Communication

When undertaking cross-cultural communications, fundamental behaviours such as looking, listening and touching may vary considerably between different cultures. It is important to familiarise yourself with these behaviours as they underpin all interactions.

It is important when engaging in cross-cultural communication that you take your time to develop relationships and establish trust, this will demonstrate you have a positive regard and respect for others.

Communication may be:

- in writing
- verbal
- through signage
- through gestures/actions
- through body language.

Activity 1

Why is it essential that you have effective communication skills when working in a cross-cultural setting?

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Non-verbal communication

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, eg: have highly developed perceptual (looking and seeing) skills. They have strict rules about viewing rituals, ceremonies and sacred objects. The viewing of these by certain people or people of the wrong gender is carefully avoided. Children are taught this as they grow up.

It is recognised in most Indigenous cultures that avoiding eye contact is polite behaviour. On meeting people who they do not know or speaking to people they do not know, Indigenous people will often avoid direct eye contact.

Kinship systems also influence looking behaviours. Depending upon how people are related determines who can be looked at when and the sex of the individual determines the details of such exchanges. Direct eye contact is limited between sexes, prolonged eye contact can be considered rude or indicative of sexual availability. Looking behaviours even extend their influence to such a degree that they affect where people sit in relation to each other and to what extent they are separated in terms of distance.

Among Indigenous people, listening does not imply looking and looking does not necessarily imply listening. This often means that a person who is not looking at you may nonetheless be listening to you. Similarly, someone who appears to be attentive may not really be listening or understanding. Non-Indigenous people often encounter silence when they ask directly for information. This silence may imply a criticism or disapproval or an element of touchiness about the topic. Don’t feel you need to fill any silences with unnecessary talk.

Pointing at a person when talking can be interpreted as insulting behaviour.

Be conscious of the messages your own body is sending. You may be verbalising at one point, while your body language is saying something completely different.

Reflect your understanding of situations with non-verbal cues – gestures and expressions.

Remember that you, as the sender of information, are responsible for the receiver having a clear understanding of the message being sent. A conscious effort is required to ensure sensitivity is maintained and clear messages are received at all times, to minimise cross-cultural conflict.

Activity 2

List five non-verbal communication strategies that you acknowledge as being important when working within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

Some differences to consider

Listed below are a few examples of how communication can differ across cultures. This list is not extensive, so you may need to carry out some extra research.

To beckon

Using one's finger to call someone to you is considered rude in Asian cultures.

Eye contact during meetings

It is not unusual for Japanese people to gaze over heads, remain silent or close their eyes and nod their head when listening to important discussions. Indigenous Australians can consider eye contact as insulting, as looking into their soul.

Smiling and laughing

Laughing with an open mouth is considered rude in Japan. It is more appropriate to cover your mouth when giggling or laughing.

Listening

Japanese people value listening and can regard Westerners as rude interrupters.

Expressing feelings and emotions

Cambodians may rarely look desperate or distressed and they seem reasonably content, even cheerful and seldom complain. Stoicism is a highly valued character trait and it reduces any tendency to complain. The 'good patient' look is what the culture demands and this may conceal significant anxiety and pain. Cambodians feel pain as acutely as anyone else, but they follow the Buddhist teaching of quiet, disciplined acceptance of what cannot presently be changed.

Eye contact

In Asia a subordinate will not 'eyeball' a superior. To do so is regarded as provocative and challenging. In the West, failure to make eye contact suggests either that the person is not listening, has low self-esteem or is being surly or insolent.

Compliments

In some Asian cultures praising children is believed to curse children and entice evil spirits to become jealous of the child.

Some young people may see compliments as covering ulterior motives or a hidden agenda.

Clothing

Some cultures are offended by women wearing short sleeves and skirts or any other items of clothing that may be regarded as revealing.

Humility versus pride

Humility is very important in Asia. To boast about one's achievements is seen as brash, uncouth and vain. Westerners value achievement and speaking about one's success can be an effective way of gaining employment, winning respect and being admired.

Naming conventions

Titles such as Mr and Mrs are not used by Tongans.

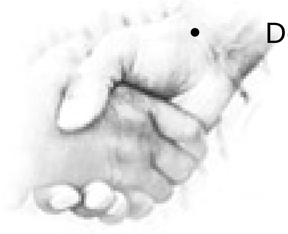
Australians accept nicknames and first names as being friendly and informal but this lack of formality may be seen as forward and inappropriate by other cultures.

Plan to develop your awareness of other cultural groups. Such understanding will enhance your skills as a worker and contribute to high quality outcomes for a diverse range of clients/customers. As well it will enhance your working relationships with colleagues and co-workers.

Verbal communication

There are many things to consider when verbally communicating, eg: when communicating with Indigenous people, the following points should be noted:

- Some Indigenous people may not read or write or communicate freely in English and may be uncomfortable or wary of people asking questions. Some Indigenous people may not use direct questions when seeking personal information.
- At times it may be difficult for an Indigenous person to find the right word to translate what they are trying to say – be patient and allow time to find the right word.
- Avoid the use of personal names and personal references wherever possible, particularly where their usage will call that person into account.
- Avoid direct criticisms of, or questions to, particular individuals. If you show people up you 'shame' or embarrass them. Indigenous people may dislike being singled out in front of others – whether for praise or blame.
- Do not cause anyone to suffer the loss of their personal dignity.
- Practice circumspection and the use of disclaimers.
- Do not directly refuse requests.



Verbal communication can be complex. To most people 'yes' means yes, however, sometimes an Indigenous person may say 'yes' immediately after a question, meaning that they understand the question, not that 'yes' is the answer. Or the response of 'yes' may mean 'Go away, I don't want to answer your question'.

Activity 3

List five verbal communication strategies that you acknowledge as being important when working within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture?

In Australia the following practice may apply:

- Manners – compared to some cultures, we expect people to say please and thankyou.
- Apologies – we apologise often and sometimes for things we have no control over, eg: 'sorry about the weather'.
- Children – it is polite and acceptable to pat or stroke a child's shoulder, say how cute they are and generally admire them.
- Elders – compared to some other societies elders may be undervalued by some Australians, however elders in Aboriginal families are highly respected.
- Saying no – we say no directly.
- Gesturing – we point with one finger, beckon people with a finger, gesticulate when we are talking.
- Physical contact such as touching, kissing – depending on our family experience we may have greater physical contact than some other cultures. Touching between men and women in public is generally acceptable.
- Clothing – we are generally accepting of women wearing clothing that other cultures may consider to be revealing.
- Questioning – generally we answer questions when asked, rather than being verbally and emotionally quiet and not answering questions. We tend to have a direct approach and ask questions if necessary.
- The use of terms such as 'mate' and 'buddy' – these are often considered terms of affection or friendship.

Of course these are generalisations and will not be true for all Australians. In fact, generally most of the 'rules' previously mentioned are the exact opposite to those behaviours expressed by Aboriginal Australians. Before embarking on our comparisons it is important to stress that every person is a unique individual, so be wary of stereotyping or grouping people together. Think person first, then culture.

Further cultural information

Example 1:

Here are some further examples of differences in communication between cultures:

- In Italy, France, Eastern Europe and much of Asia, health issues are approached from a less direct process. It is unacceptable with many such cultures to speak directly about a diagnosis or prognosis.
- Chinese, Greek, Filipino and other cultures find it very important to have someone there with them no matter how minor the treatment, problem or decision is.
- Chinese people may have strong religious beliefs about the Feng Shui of their room and, depending on their cultural background, this may influence their stress in a hospital or clinic greatly.
- Vietnamese people often use their family name first, then their middle name and lastly their given name (Caucasian/Australian first name). They may not even provide their given name unless prompted, as it is not considered of the same importance as Caucasian/Australian naming.
- Many Siberians tend not to address people by name and expression of emotion is highly acceptable. You may not be comfortable with emotional expression, but that is your cultural experience.
- Greek and Italian culture is strong and many Australian children are still taught the culture after their school time. Greek and Italian people value their culture and education highly. Family contact and group family decisions are important. Many families report that they are not comfortable with hospital jargon and technical terms if English is not their primary language.
- Japanese people hold great value in the presence of their family with respect to decision making.
- There are about 21, 000 Cambodians living in Australia and it is estimated that about 60% practice Buddhism. In contrast to European and Siberian cultures, Cambodians tend not to express emotions and often appear very comfortable and without complaint. They may in fact not be so and require clear questions about their comfort and conditions. Cambodian people with traditional/Buddhist beliefs consider religious rituals very important.

Example 2:

A Greek patient in a small ward local hospital suddenly receives a large number of visitors. The hospital is used to small visitor numbers.

This may be a situation your worksite may have to deal with.

There can be a dilemma balancing the needs of this particular patient with the needs of other patients who prefer quiet and privacy.

How could this worksite deal with this situation sensitively and appropriately?

Example 3:

Most Aboriginal people like to stay in touch with extended family members. It is important to them. They may have visitors that stroll in at any time of the day or night.

The basic elements of cross-cultural communication include:

- Verbal behaviour – pay attention to your accent, tone and volume of voice and rate of speech. Eliminate jargon, acronyms and slang. Use basic language and, if possible, use some basic words in the other person's language.
- Non-verbal behaviour – consider the other person's rules about eye contact, facial expressions, touching, personal space, politeness and respect, gestures, clothing and body language.
- Attitudes, values and prejudices – critically examine your own values and prejudices and how they impact on your communication with persons from diverse cultures. Consider the other person's values around formality/informality, cooperation/ competition and individual/group.
- Communication style – consider cultural differences in gender roles, logic, turn taking, silence, humour, politeness and deference to authority.

Communication: the cultural context

Communication occurs within a context. One of the key considerations in effective communication is the cultural context of the interaction. Consider the following examples of cultural differences.

Language

When learning English as a new language, people go through five stages:

1. Hearing what's said in English.
2. Translating into their own language.
3. Constructing the response in their own language.
4. Translating the response into English.
5. Responding in English.

When broken down in this way, the room for error is obvious.

Activity 4

List five strategies for working with clients who have a poor to moderate command of English.

Cross-cultural communication and your client

Quite often, we assume that because someone speaks English, we will understand them and that they are similar to us. This can be far from the truth. The English language is spoken in many countries and each of these have their own unique cultural heritage. There may be unfamiliar words, expressions and style of talking. Humour may be expressed quite differently. Accents may be difficult to understand and the way we seek to clarify all of the above may not be understood by the person we are trying to communicate with.

Example 4:

Do you know what the following mean?

- 'It was really good craic.' (Irish)
- 'That guy was really pissed.' (American)
- 'We're going to the batch.' (New Zealand)
- 'We had a wicked time!' (Australian slang)
- 'Johnnie's bro is sick.' (Greek/Italian slang)

This is what they mean:

- 'We had a really good time.'
- 'That guy was really angry.'
- 'We're going to the shack.'
- 'We had a really good time!'
- 'Johnnie's brother is a great person.'

Work practices that are culturally appropriate are non-discriminatory and free of bias, stereotyping, racism and prejudice.

Strategies for addressing individual difference

Your attitude is your best tool in dealing positively with individual difference. Strategies for addressing individual difference include:

- Respecting people and their belief systems and life choices.
- Listening to the client's/customer's needs/wants.
- Engaging cultural interpreters/language interpreters or other communication tools to ensure that the client/customer has an opportunity to be understood and express their wishes.
- Believing that the client/customer is the expert on themselves and their life.
- Believing that communities/businesses who engage with the diversity within them will be stronger and healthier.

Cultural and linguistically diverse (CLD) communities

Providing appropriate information for culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) communities has lacked attention over the past several years.

These communities theoretically have access to resources and services available to mainstream English speaking communities, but their language and culture makes this information less than useful to them.

Many communities, professionals and businesses are unaware of the needs within these diverse communities.

To ensure you cater for these communities it is important to:

- produce literature in the relevant language with information identifying appropriate and relative needs
- involve communities to be part of the process in the information production
- bring together informal programs that may be relevant for a particular client/customer from a CLD background
- network and work together within the communities.

As you can see – even though the words may be familiar, the meaning can be completely different from what you may think.

The way cultural groups are referred to between countries can differ significantly so it is always good to check how someone prefers to be referred to. Calling someone a Yugoslav and not Croatian can have dire consequences. African Americans prefer to be referred to as blacks, whereas this would not be considered an appropriate way to refer to Indigenous Australians.

It is important to apply the usual communication skills of observation (picking up on body language, to make sure you are not offending), asking questions and demonstrating a genuine willingness to understand.

Activity responses

Activity 1 response

It is essential that you have effective communication skills when working in a cross-cultural setting, as you need to be able to identify communication issues and address these issues so that you develop and maintain effective relationships. There are cultural differences that must be understood before meaningful and respectful dialogue can proceed between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

A range of communication strategies are employed to ensure safe service delivery. When working in a cross-cultural context, it is also essential to identify any communication strategies that are ineffective and inappropriate, so that these strategies can be remodelled to meet service needs.

Activity 2 response

Five important non-verbal communication strategies when working within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures may include the following:

- It is recognised in most Indigenous cultures that avoiding eye contact is polite behaviour.
- Among Indigenous people, listening does not imply looking and looking does not necessarily imply listening.
- Respecting kinship structures, eg: ‘avoidance’ relationships between sexes.
- Being conscious of the messages your own body is sending, eg: pointing at a person when talking can be interpreted as insulting behaviour.
- Using non-verbal cues, eg: gestures and expressions can reflect your understanding of situations.

Activity 3 response

Five important verbal communication strategies when working within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures may include the following:

- Consider how you ask a question. Some Indigenous people may not use direct questions when seeking personal information and thus may be uncomfortable or wary of people asking questions. A direct question, or a direct criticism, could ‘shame’ the Indigenous client.
- At times it may be difficult for an Indigenous person to find the right word to translate what they are trying to say, be patient and allow time to find the right word.
- Do not directly refuse requests.
- Avoid the use of personal names and personal references wherever possible particularly where their usage will call that person into account.
- To most people ‘yes’ means yes, however sometimes an Indigenous person may say ‘yes’ immediately after a question, meaning that they understand the question, not that ‘yes’ is the answer. Or the response of ‘yes’ may mean ‘Go away, I don’t want to answer your question’.

Activity 4 response

Your list should have included some of the following:

- using an interpreter
- using a family or community member
- making sure you use simple language
- eradicating jargon
- speaking slowly and clearly
- watching for non-verbal clues (eg: a frown may indicate they do not understand)
- giving them time to 'decode' what you have said
- checking that the client understands what you have said (Asking 'Did you hear me?' invites a 'yes' response. Asking a client to repeat what you have said may be a more useful strategy).

Adopt appropriate leadership style (1513)

In this publication we focus on personal and professional competence – the qualities and importance of leadership. We discuss the following:

- Leadership styles – an overview.
- 'Situational leadership'.
- Professional standards and codes of conduct.

Leadership styles: an overview

> After a continuous search, since 1900, for what makes a good leader, there is still no comprehensive theory of leadership, no clear knowledge about what good leaders do that is unique, or understanding of how to select leaders.
>
> (Karpin, D [Chair] Report of the Industry Task Force on Leadership and Management Skills 1995, *Enterprising Nation: renewing Australia's managers to meet the challenge of the Asia-Pacific Century*, AGPS, Canberra)

What we do know is that with good leadership, groups and individuals will collaborate in a positive manner.

What makes a leader? What makes an effective leader? Big questions, with no easy answers... As Enterprising Nation so clearly states, there is no one theory of leadership, no 'blueprint' for how to make it work. To again quote Enterprising Nation:

> There have been over 5 000 studies on leadership since the early 1900s. If some of our simple notions of leadership were true, it would stand out like a sore thumb in the research evidence... It doesn't. The likelihood that all those studies have missed anything let alone something that is very straightforward and obvious is extremely low. Further, if leadership could be simply understood and recognised, picking leaders would be easy and the selection mistakes would rarely be made. There would be few failures.
>
> (*Enterprising Nation*, p. 1188)

Leadership theories

Studies in leadership have been around since 1900. There have been a number of different approaches to describing leadership – each with their own insight and shortcomings. As a way of organising 'leadership thinking', theories on leadership can be separated into two 'streams' – universalist and contingency (or situational).

Universalist theories

Universalist theories basically argue that there is one type of leader behaviour inherently superior to others, regardless of the circumstances in which the leader operates. Universalist theories are often characterised by prescriptive statements about what sort of characteristics leaders should possess, or how leaders should behave to operate effectively.

Contingency theories

Contingency theories assume that different situations require different leader behaviours, ie: the appropriate leader behaviour will depend on the situation (hence 'situational' leadership).

Leadership style

The universalist approach has become increasingly less popular, as the contradictory and inconclusive research findings became evident. As we moved further away from trait theory (or theories about the development of characteristics that constitute leadership), more attention has been paid to 'leadership styles' and the way they affect group interaction.

Leadership 'styles' are the behaviours we demonstrate when supervising workers. There are probably as many different leader styles as there are leaders. However, the 'broad brush' approach would suggest the following common leader styles.

Authoritarian (or autocratic) style

An authoritarian style where the leader makes most of the decisions – decision-making authority rests with the leader. Under an authoritarian leadership style, group members have minimal freedom to make decisions and act on them.

Democratic (or participative) style

The leader consults with the group about things that concern them. Group members are part of the decision-making process and have some freedom to shape the group.

Laissez-faire (or abdicratic) style

The group members determine action and the leader intervenes only minimally. This leadership style may be very effective with highly motivated and experienced group members.

Is there one ‘best’ leadership style?

So, is there one best leadership style? Should we aspire to an authoritarian, or democratic, or laissez-faire style of leadership? Well, as with much in the complex (and challenging) world of leadership, there is no ‘one size fits all’.

Activity 1

Think about your own leadership style. Which of the above leadership styles best describes your own approach to supervising workers? Are you comfortable with your style? Are there any changes you would like to make?

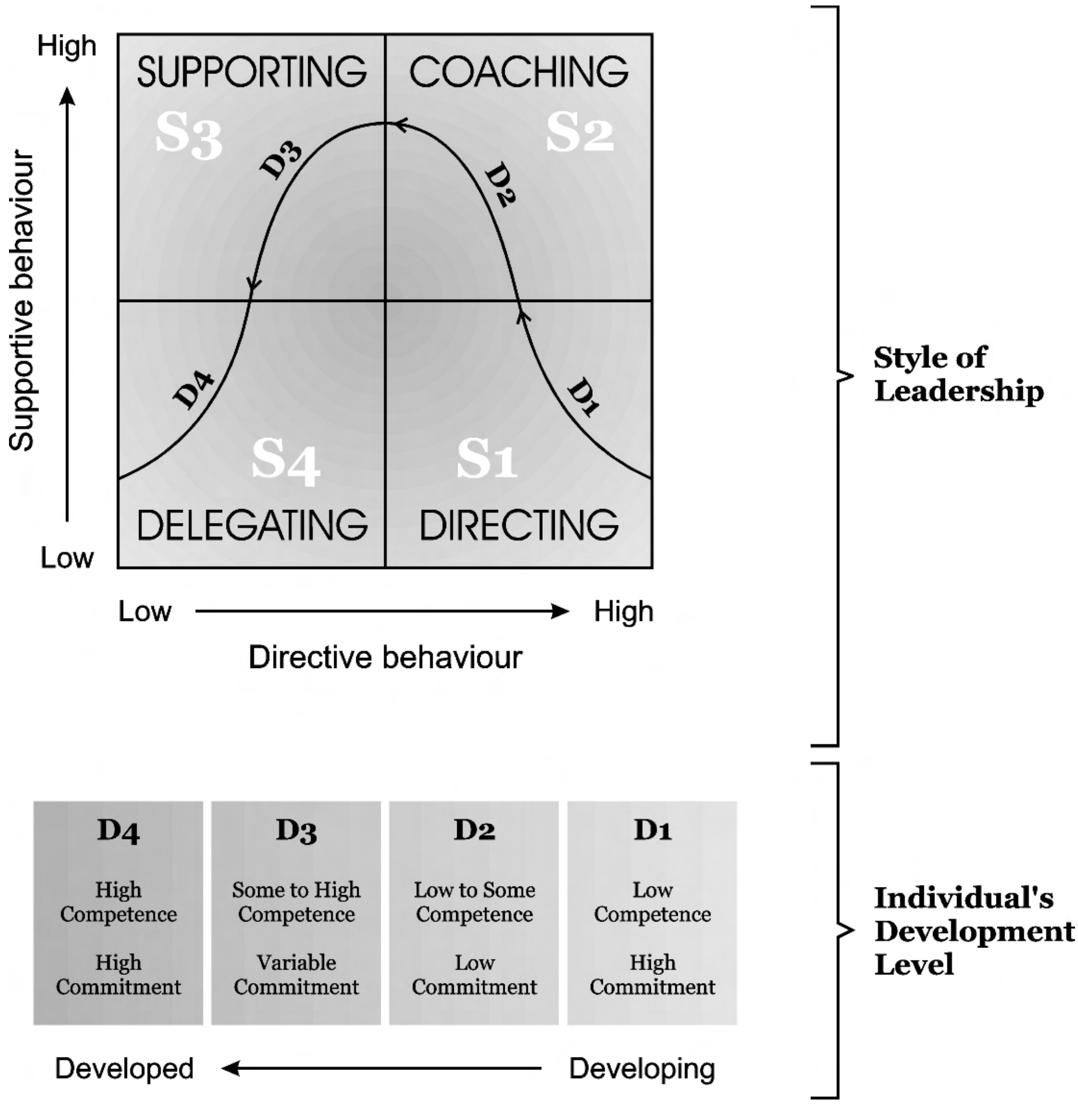
It would be fair to say that the skilled leader should use a leadership style that matches the group situation – a ‘leadership continuum’, if you like. This is the premise behind much of the current leadership material, which can be characterised as ‘contingency leadership’. The assumption being that different situations require different leader behaviours. In other words, the effectiveness in the leadership role is contingent upon situational differences, hence the term ‘situational leadership’.

Here, the emphasis is on analysing the situation and choosing appropriate leader behaviours to match the situation. So, rather than prescribing the style of leadership, the contingency approach describes situations in which leadership styles are effective.

More on situational leadership

Different leadership styles and behaviour can be effective, depending on the development levels of workers. ‘Undeveloped’ workers need considerable task direction, while developed workers require little supervision.

Situational leadership is the ‘model’ behind Four Quadrant Leadership (there has been some work in community services with this type of leadership training) and ‘The One Minute Manager’ series of books and tapes.



On codes, standards and practice

Ethics: a system of moral principles by which human actions and proposals may be judged good or bad or right or wrong, the rules of conduct, recognised in respect of a particular class of human actions, eg: medical ethics, moral principles, as of an individual.

(*Macquarie Dictionary*, 1997)

Standard: anything taken by general consent as a basis of comparison, an approved model, a grade or level of achievement, or excellence.

(*Macquarie Dictionary*, 1997)

Best practice: measuring performance against defined quality (or 'best') practice standards in an industry or sector.

(*Butterworth's Concise Australian Legal Dictionary*)

Codes of ethics (sometimes called codes of practice) outline best practice within a profession. They are designed to encourage ethical behaviour and decision-making and serve as a safeguard to ensure basic standards are adhered to. In many instances, professional bodies establish registration boards, to ensure that workers trained in a particular discipline are competent and ethical.

The code of ethics represents a statement of the standard of practice expected of that profession and the individual worker within the profession. These codes of ethics/practice go a long way towards 'standardising' responses to ethically difficult and challenging professional situations. It provides a set of basic principles for distinguishing between acceptable and unacceptable (or unethical) behaviour in the worker/client/stakeholder relationship.

> Example:
>
> The Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) Code of Ethics (largely based on the International Code of Ethics).
>
> A code of ethics provides a set of standards by which the social work profession (or the social worker) can distinguish what is legitimate or acceptable behaviour within social work practice. Such a code identifies standards of practice which adequately reflect the value base of the profession and stress basic principles on which to make ethical decisions. It also provides a statement of these standards for those outside the profession to evaluate the social work service being offered.
>
> This code is a guide to the conduct of members of the social work profession and will be the basis for the adjudication of issues in ethics.
>
> Reproduced with the kind permission of the Australian Association of Social Workers Code of Ethics

This publication looked at personal qualities, managerial styles and competence.

Activity response

Activity 1 response

Your answers will vary according to your situation. You may find it useful to discuss your response with other students or with your facilitator.

Consult with key people (1421)

To identify issues and needs of a community, a community profile needs to be established through research to understand the values and attitudes of members of the community. Key people and key organisations can be of great benefit in providing information about the community. These key people understand clearly the values and attitudes of community members and can present relevant information in context. This publication looks at identifying key people and their attributes and importance.

In supporting community participation, it is essential that the worker has the ability to:

- use local information such as the media to find out who is doing what in the community
- become aware of local community groups, networks, organisations and active community members
- discuss information with co-workers and community organisations
- find out who participates in what community issues and to what level
- be aware of any organisations that are directly related with addressing community needs and issues.

Who are key people?

Key people are individuals or members of organisations who know the community well and are actively involved in a variety of aspects of the community. They are often considered community representatives and may include group leaders, service providers or elected members. Generally, they hold a wealth of information about the community. This information can be used to develop a program relevant to the community that encourages participation.

Key people include the following:

- Advocacy groups that speak up for or represent members of the community. Advocacy groups generally represent the interests of people who are unable to do so themselves. In community development, advocacy is concerned with using a variety of techniques to empower people to become independent and gain the skills to advocate for themselves. Several community organisations take on the role of advocacy to represent members of the broader community.
- Policy and decision-makers. Local council representatives, managers of government and non-government organisations or politicians, whose roles are to establish policies and make decisions on behalf of members of the community. It is therefore essential that individuals in these roles have a broad knowledge and understanding of the community, issues the community faces and the needs of the community.
- Individuals or groups that are directly affected by the strategies or actions taken in a community program may also be key people. It is important to ensure participation by these primary stakeholders in planning stages.

Example 1:

A community decides to introduce a program to address the needs and issues associated with community members with mental illness. The individuals with a mental illness, however, are not consulted. Decision-makers believe, due to their mental illness, that they are incapable of providing input. These decisions made by others may result in an inappropriate program being introduced or taking action that devalues the members of the community they are aiming to support.

- Community leaders.
- People with formal and informal representative roles. This may include a variety of community workers who can provide information that reflects community needs and issues.
- Service Clubs and groups are often involved in programs and initiatives and sometimes sponsor them. Examples of this include the Lions Club, supporting glaucoma testing, or Rotary supporting field scholarships. Other examples include such groups as ‘Make a Wish’ and Canteen (for teenagers with cancer).
- Individual members of the community may also become key people. They may become key people because they have lived in the community for a long period, been actively involved in community events and have formed a strong network throughout the community. Examples of individuals who have become key people include owners of the local shop, people who work in local media and those who have skills in organising events.

The attributes of key people

Key people within the community often share several personality attributes and are capable of:

- giving and seeking information and opinions
- encouraging participation from a broad range of community members
- encouraging communication and linking individuals or community organisations together
- aiming to solve problems, address issues and provide the community with direction
- acting as motivators by stimulating other members of the community into action
- minimising conflict through effective mediating and negotiation.

All of these attributes will assist to support community participation and therefore key people are central to community programs. As a community worker, it is essential that you identify and establish relationships with key people within the community and enlist their support in developing programs and encouraging community participation.

The importance of key people

Key people are extremely important in all areas of community work. They hold a broad range of skills and knowledge and have the ability to:

- create links of communication between individuals and organisations within the community
- assist with resources required for community programs
- address issues and encourage others to become involved in solving community problems
- hold the respect of members of the community and therefore have their opinions heard by others
- hold or have access to a wide range of information that is directly related to community needs and issues
- identify gaps in existing services or community programs
- ensure the services provided by the program are a result of a real need in the community
- understand community attitudes and beliefs
- assess the relevance of a community program to the members of the community
- ensure the program fulfils community needs
- support community participation and share the workload.

Key people will often be able to assist you in developing strategies and supporting community participation in a method that is acceptable to members of the community. The ability of key people to develop appropriate strategies and policies is based on their in depth knowledge of community structures, their contacts within the community and their understanding of individual community members. It is important that appropriate key people are enlisted to support a community program to ensure both the success and ongoing work of the program.

Example 2:

An Aboriginal community decides to address the issues related to alcoholism. A community meeting is held and a decision is made for the town to become 'dry'. The program developed relies heavily on key people becoming involved. Appropriate key people are those individuals within the respective Aboriginal community that are held in high regard, rather than outsiders. Members of the community will have their opinions heard and respected, which will help to increase the success and future of the program. By enlisting the support of key people from within the community, the community can gain a sense of ownership over the program, which also will assist in introducing pro-active strategies that are relevant to the community.

The role of key people is critical in supporting community participation. The first step is to enlist the support of key people to ensure the community assumes ownership of the program. When the community assumes ownership they will address appropriate needs and issues by using strategies that are relevant and pro-active for the community.

Activity 1

Explain in your own words who the key people within a community are. Give an example and explain why it is important to enlist the support of key people in any community program.

In this publication we have considered who the key people in a community are, some attributes they have and why it is important to include them in consultation processes.

Activity response

Activity 1 response

Answers will vary according to your situation. You may find it useful to discuss your response to this activity with other students or with your facilitator.

Keep in mind that key people in the community include:

- those with access to information, eg: local government members and staff, owners of businesses particularly in rural towns, leaders (formal and informal) of groups
- people who have authority to make decisions
- strong advocates of community issues.

Work ethically (0056)

This publication looks at various contributing factors to working ethically, including:

- ethics and morals
- codes of ethics and codes of practice
- client charters
- legal issues
- your job description
- your value system
- the organisational goal.

Ethics

That word 'ethically' is a difficult one to come to terms with, ie: what do we mean when we talk about working ethically? It is important for workers to understand, as the code of ethics, or code of practice of your profession and/or your organisation will form the basis of your work practice. Ethics are the moral principles by which human actions may be judged good or bad, right or wrong.

A code of ethics is a statement about practice or what a person or organisation will strive to do. It is based on core values or the beliefs of the person or organisation.

All professions have developed codes of ethics over a period of time. Set out below is a basic Code of Ethics which could form the framework for any specific Code of Ethics. Note the similarities between the content of the Code of Ethics and The Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

1. Recognition of each individual as a unique human being.
2. Realisation of the full potential of both children and adults.
3. Environments that host well-being and positive self-esteem in clients, staff and families.
4. Autonomy and self-reliance in clients, staff and families.
5. Appreciation of the special vulnerability of older persons, people with disabilities and children and their need for safe and healthy environments.

6. Recognition of each client being an individual with unique needs and abilities.
7. Respect for confidentiality and the right of every client and family to privacy.
8. Development of individuals socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically.
9. Use of developmentally appropriate instructional techniques for children and young people.
10. Appreciation of childhood as a unique and valuable stage in the life cycle.
11. Professional practice based on the best current knowledge of child growth and development, issues associated with disability and the ageing process.
12. Recognition and support for the interconnectedness of the child and family.
13. Support for families in their task of nurturing children, caring for people with disabilities and older people.
14. Effective protection and advocacy for the rights of children, people with disabilities and older persons.
15. Support for the right of all children, regardless of income or other circumstances, to have access to quality early childhood programs.
16. Unity among people who work in childcare settings, facilities for people with disabilities and aged care facilities, and cooperation with other professional groups concerned with the welfare of their clients.
17. Continuing growth as professionals in early childhood education, disability and aged care work.
18. Appreciation of the diversity of cultures within our society and protection of the cultural identity of clients in each minority group.
19. Acknowledgement and use of the power of the media in the promotion of early childhood, disability and aged care issues.
20. Rights of parents and other family members to pertinent information about their child or loved one who is receiving care.

As well as the Code of Ethics adopted by professionals in the caring professions, Australian Governments have enacted a number of pieces of legislation designed to protect the rights of disadvantaged groups. These laws apply to individuals, organisations, companies and workplaces.

Ethics and morals

Morals are associated with personal conduct, private measures or standards which individuals attempt to emulate. In contrast, ethics are defined as the principles, standards, rules or norms prescribed or adhered to by specific communities to regulate the behaviour of their members, eg: the National Health and Medical Research Council; Australian Association of Social Workers; Australian Psychologists Association; Australian Institute of Welfare and Community Work.

Example 1:

A code of ethics provides a set of standards by which the social work profession (or the social worker) can distinguish what is legitimate or acceptable behaviour within social work practice. Such a code identifies standards of practice which adequately reflect the value base of the profession and stress basic principles on which to make ethical decisions. It also provides a statement of these standards for those outside the profession to evaluate the social work service being offered.

This code is a guide to the conduct of members of the social work profession and will be the basis for the adjudication of issues in ethics.

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Case studies

Consider the following case studies and reflect on how you may deal with each situation:

Example 2:

- An ongoing client offers money to your organisation (a non-profit, non-government organisation) in appreciation of quality service.
- You are the manager of the agency and a staff member forms a relationship with an existing client.
- A staff member refuses to provide services to a client who is seeking an abortion.
- A young person on a court order admits she has breached the court order. You have an ongoing working relationship with her and it has been difficult to foster any sense of trust, or self-disclosure.
- The client discloses they are taking their daughter overseas for a cliterectomy (this procedure is illegal in South Australia, under the *Children's Protection Act*).

It is important to understand our own biases by noticing how we feel, think and behave in particular situations. We can then manage our own responses appropriately. We will further consider this issue later in this publication.

Ethics/codes of ethics

Codes of ethics (sometimes called Codes of Practice) outline best practice within a profession. They are designed to encourage ethical behaviour and decision making and they serve as a safeguard to make sure basic standards are adhered to. In many instances, professional bodies establish registration boards to ensure that workers trained in a particular discipline are competent and ethical.

A Code of Ethics represents a statement of the standard of care expected of that profession and the individual worker within the profession. They go a long way towards 'standardising' responses to ethically difficult and challenging professional situations. They provide a set of basic principles for distinguishing between acceptable and unacceptable (or unethical) behaviour in the worker/client relationship.

Example 3:

The Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) Code of Ethics (largely based on the International Code of Ethics) has sections on the following principles and standards of practice:

- Commitment to social justice.
- Development of knowledge.
- Relationship with employing organisation.
- Confidentiality and privacy.
- Client self-determination.
- Service.
- The integrity of the profession.
- Competence and professional development.
- Professional conduct.

Codes of ethics also serve as useful summary documents describing the principles of the sector.

Ethical conduct

Whenever we are working with people we are going to face ethical dilemmas.

Firstly we need to consider what ethical conduct is. Ethical conduct, in health and community service provision, is that which meets both moral and legal obligations to the people in our care. It is a reflection of a values system that:

- respects a person's individuality including their:
  - dignity
  - cultural and religious beliefs
  - individual needs and preferences
  - individual attitudes and values
  - individual rights
- promotes safe and competent care practices
- promotes and supports the individual's:
  - health and well-being
  - informed decision making
- promotes and supports trust within the relationships between workers, clients and their significant others including:
  - maintenance of privacy and confidentiality
  - prevention of abuse or exploitation
  - acceptance of accountability and responsibility
- values and promotes an environment which supports and sustains health and well-being.

The following hints will assist you in maintaining a high level of professional and ethical conduct.

Communication courtesy

- Approach clients in a friendly, willing and courteous manner.
- Show common courtesy at all times to clients and colleagues.
- Show empathy towards your clients.
- Be non-judgmental.
- Be considerate, tactful and thoughtful.
- Display patience and tolerance for others.

Professional approach to work ethic

Client focus:

- Willingly assist your clients and colleagues wherever necessary.
- Demonstrate that you care for your client's well-being and that you are interested in their life.
- Respect the rights of all clients to follow their beliefs and opinions and avoid pushing your opinions or beliefs on to others.

Self focus:

- Respond to situations professionally and efficiently.
- Perform your duties conscientiously and to the best of your ability.
- Carry out your work instructions happily, willingly and accurately.
- Willingly assist your clients and colleagues wherever necessary.
- Be organised, flexible and resourceful.
- Be prepared.
- Be highly organised and manage time efficiently.
- Be flexible in your work approach and deal with unexpected circumstances calmly and efficiently.
- Know your role and the expectations of your organisation.
- Consult the client's case/care plan and follow it accurately.
- Prioritise duties according to client's wishes and within time restraints.
- Be reliable and punctual.
- Know your organisation and abide by its policies, standards and guidelines.
- Be prompt in client service delivery.
- Complete all tasks assigned to you.
- Keep absences at a minimum.
- Be responsible for your actions.

- Take pride in your work.
- Assume responsibility to understand your own values and attitudes, your approach and level of commitment to your work.
- Take responsibility to improve your skills and knowledge and to continually learn new skills.
- Immediately address problems and resolve them as they arise.
- Be trustworthy, dependable, kind and honest.
- Have a strong belief in the value of your work.

Organisational focus:

- Know your role and the expectations of your organisation.
- Know your organisation and abide by its policies, standards and guidelines.
- Advise your supervisor and client if you are going to be late, or absent from work.

Unethical behaviour

What do we do if we are made aware of unethical work practices? A good question, with no easy answer.

In theory, unethical behaviour is just that – unethical. It contravenes acceptable work standards. In practice, 'blowing the whistle' on unethical behaviour is more problematic. What do we do in the following instances?

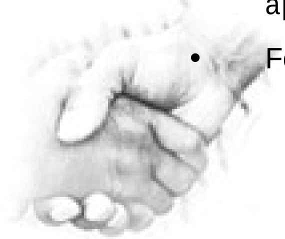
- The unethical behaviour originates with a board member? Or the CEO? Or our supervisor?
- The business is family-based (the contrast between family loyalties and the onus of reporting unethical behaviour)?
- The behaviour errs on the unethical; the outcome is justified ('the end justifies the means')?

There have been a number of films documenting the effects (both positive and negative) of 'calling' unethical behaviour – see *The Insider* (whistleblowing in the tobacco industry); *The Interview* (a police investigation, where the perpetrator is known but the evidence is obscured – a question of ends and means); and *Dead Poet's Society* (the personal cost in a teacher standing up for a student in the face of parental oppression).

These difficulties are acknowledged in the *Whistleblower's Protection Act 1993*. The principle behind the Act is in protecting the employee in disclosure of misconduct which ought to be disclosed in the public interest. 'Public interest information' is broadly defined. It includes information about a person doing any unlawful act, or any public official wasting resources or money.

The following considerations are offered as 'suggestions only' in navigating through a potentially difficult work situation.

- At the first sign of inappropriate or unethical behaviour, discuss with the appropriate person. In most instances, this will be your supervisor.
- Follow established organisational protocols.



- Refer to organisational policy, and codes of practice/codes of conduct. They can be of assistance in navigating through difficulty.
- Remember that there is the potential for the need to justify your actions. Take appropriate precautions. Document your actions. Make sure you have an 'audit trail', if verification of actions should be required.
- In documenting, make sure you note the reasons for taking a certain course of action. This is particularly important if there is likely to be controversy around the course of action. Documentation is a way of demonstrating that you have not acted irresponsibly.

Ethical issues

In the following sections we explore some specific ethical issues that may arise in community services.

There is a wide range of ethical issues in aged and community care sectors. Some examples are as follows:

1. Acceptance of gifts from clients

As a staff member in a residential or community program, is it ethical to accept gifts from clients? The short answer is no – although there is much to consider.

You may decide to accept a chocolate or sweet from a client rather than offending them by refusal. However, be ready to say something like, 'Thank you for your offer, but it is against our work policy for me to accept,' when offered gifts and/or monetary tips.

2. Witnessing Wills and other legal documents

As a care worker, you may be asked by clients or their families to witness documents. This may be considered a conflict of interests. You need to protect both your client and the integrity of your role. You need to avoid any situation or activity that may give rise to accusations of impropriety on your part, and this could occur where legal documents are involved.

You will need to check with your supervisor to ascertain your organisation's policy and procedure for assisting clients who need help in this area of their lives.

3. Finances

Your client gives you their bankcard and PIN and asks you to go to the bank on their behalf and withdraw money for them. What should you do?

Again, you will need to check with your supervisor to ascertain your organisation's policy and procedure for assisting clients who need help in this area of their lives.

4. Restraint

Where we are working with clients who have reduced acuity and cognitive function, the issue of restraint will probably come up. These clients may wander or exhibit behaviour that constitutes a risk to themselves or others. There are laws to protect clients against unlawful detention and this includes being held in locked areas. Many organisations are able to resolve this issue and maintain client safety by having coded door locks with the code displayed close by the door. Always be guided by the policies of your organisation.

What other types of restraints are commonly used?

These restraints may be physical or chemical means used to limit the client's unsafe behaviours or activities. Responsible organisations will have specific policies, procedures and protocols, based on legal guidelines, governing restraint. However, there is often still a conflict between a person-centred approach to care and a system-centred (routine-centred) approach.

We also need to ask ourselves:

- How good are we at accepting some elements of so-called problem behaviour? (Unusual dressing habits, repetitive behaviours, wandering.)
- Can we modify the environment or activities? (Wandering paths, lighting change, reduce stimuli.)
- Can we determine the cause of the problem and attempt to solve it? (Unpopular staff member, change in routine or environment.)

If staff members have sufficient training, knowledge and skills in behaviour modification strategies, the ethical dilemma regarding restraints will become less of an issue.

5. Sexuality

Sexuality as a part of personal identity, influences the way the individual thinks, behaves and interacts with others.

The sex drive is fundamental and strong, but the expression of sexuality is much more than the physical act of sex. Human sexuality is expressed in attitudes, feelings and behaviour, and is part of an individual's need to give and receive love. It is influenced by physical, psychological, sociocultural, and spiritual factors. Sometimes, a person's selfesteem is related to how his/her physical being or body image is perceived and can change when body image is altered.

Some people wish to remain sexually active whilst in care facilities. Should clients want to share a sexual relationship whilst they are in your care, you need to recognise that it is their right to do so, providing the relationship is conducted between consenting adults who have the cognitive function to make the decision. You will need to ensure their privacy.

Being able to support such a relationship will depend upon your ability to be non-judgmental about sex and elderly or disabled people. You will also need to be open-minded regarding masturbation, same gender couples and other such sexually-based issues that may be controversial. The organisation's policy will be a guide for how such situations are to be approached, including how to respond to possible reactions from the client's family/friends.

6. Palliative care

People in the final stages of life require palliative care. There must be very special provisions for pain management and to support the dying person to enable them to die with dignity.

We all have the right to consent to, or decline medical treatment. To make informed choices, open communication between the person who is dying, their relatives and friends, and the people who are providing both medical and palliative care, is essential.

The World Health Organisation states that palliative care:

- Affirms life and regards dying as a normal process.
- Neither hastens nor postpones death.
- Provides relief from pain and other distressing symptoms.
- Integrates the psychological and the spiritual aspects of care:
  - Offers a support system to help the dying person to live as actively as possible until death.
  - Offers a support system to help the family and friends cope during their loved one's illness and in their bereavement.

7. Legal issues

There are laws to protect the rights of people who are dying, and these laws also serve to protect staff from having to make difficult moral decisions on behalf of the people in their care.

In South Australia, the *Consent to Medical Treatment and Palliative Care Act 1995* states, that when a person is experiencing the terminal phase of a terminal illness, a medical practitioner is under no duty to use life-sustaining measures, in order to prolong life in a moribund state without any real prospect of recovery.

Documents organised in advance, eg: Medical Power of Attorney or an Anticipatory Direction, can record wishes about the final stages if the person is unable to speak for him or herself.

A Medical Power of Attorney form, states the name of a person who knows about final wishes and who will ensure that they are carried out.

An Anticipatory Direction form enables a person to state the treatment he or she may want or not want during the terminal phase of a terminal illness.

A Palliative Care Order can record the decision that a family member has made about future care, if the person is unable to do so themselves. Under the *Guardianship and Administration Act 1993*, family members are able to make medical decisions should there be no guardian or medical agent. Information sheets about these and others is available from the Office of the Public Advocate in your state.

8. Abuse

This is defined as 'any act occurring within a relationship where there is an implication of trust, which results in harm to a person. Abuse may be physical, sexual, financial, psychological, social and/or neglect'.

Abuse is often inflicted by someone close to the person, who may be a family member or other person with whom they have a relationship of trust. Staff members may also abuse their clients in any one of the ways described above. Such behaviour is a serious problem and must be acted upon.

Should you see any abuse towards your client/s from anyone, you must take this information to your supervisor so that appropriate action be taken to stop the behaviour.

Abuse is a breach of a person's rights and sometimes these breaches are criminal or civil offences.

As you can see from the examples there are many ethical dilemmas facing those who provide care services and these are only a few of them. It is important to remember to behave in a manner that respects individual rights, upholds the law and reflects professional practice.

Any ethical dilemmas that you are unable to resolve in your day-to-day role should be taken to your supervisor or to a person who has the authority to assist you in dealing with them.

Example 4:

You are working with a person whom you believe is accepting money from the wife of an elderly man in the residential care facility. It comes to your attention that the wife has been told that she is paying for additional serves of fruit between meals, something she is prepared to pay for, as she knows that her husband really enjoys the fruit. You confront the staff member regarding her unethical conduct and remind her that the client is already paying for whatever food he needs. She shrugs off your comments and says that if the wife wants to give her money that it is none of your business. You take your concerns to the supervisor who investigates the issue. The supervisor is told by the dishonest staff member that you are telling lies about her. What should you do now?

Remember that organisations have protocols that support resolution of grievances including ethical issues and the following is an example of how these policies or protocols may be developed.

Example 5:

Wyatt Springs Health Care

Principles of ethical practice as at September 2008

Wyatt Springs Health Care will behave in an ethical manner in its dealings with clients, residents, volunteers, general public and business partners.

Wyatt Springs Health Care will always seek to provide a service that makes a positive difference to people's lives.

Wyatt Springs Health Care will always seek to maintain the rights of people to determine their own lives and to live a quality life.

Wyatt Springs Health Care will always seek to support the citizenship of its clients.

Wyatt Springs Health Care will respond as soon as possible to any ethical issue that arises during the course of working and providing services in Wyatt Springs Health Care.

Managers who consider that an ethical issue has not been resolved through the usual management structures, need to inform their Executive Manager in writing.

If an executive becomes aware of an ethical issue that has not been resolved, they are to bring the issue to the attention of the CEO and the Wyatt Springs Health Care Executive Group at the earliest opportunity.

Wyatt Springs Health Care will attempt to resolve ethical issues that may arise in the course of working or providing services within Wyatt Springs Health Care through its management structure in consultation with the Wyatt Springs Health Care Executive Group and the CEO.

Wyatt Springs Health Care CEO may elect to form a Wyatt Springs Health Care Ethics/Values Committee. This committee would deal with ethical considerations that arise in the course of working or provide services within Wyatt Springs Health Care to offer advice to the Wyatt Springs Health Care Executive Management.

The CEO may elect to forward ethical issues that arise in the course of working or providing services within Wyatt Springs Health Care to an outside agency that has an Ethics Committee that specialises in specific issues for advice.

Ethical issues that arise in other organisations with which Wyatt Springs Health Care has a business relationship, and that create a conflict with Wyatt Springs Health Care should be referred to that employees' Executive Manager.

Related documents:

- Wyatt Springs Health Care Vision
- Wyatt Springs Health Care Values Statement
- Client Services Policy
- Advocacy Policy – Residential Facilities
- Advocacy Policy – Community Programs.

You can see from the draft policy that there are both policy statements regarding what the organisation considers to be ethical, and statements of the systematic steps to be taken to reach resolution when there have been breaches of that ethical practice. The issues are first taken to higher levels of authority within the organisation. Failing resolution, issues may be taken outside the organisation so that non-prejudicial resolution might be reached.

Your value system

As well as organisational requirements, you will need to consider your own value system, your concept of ‘right’ and ‘wrong’. This may clash with your organisation’s philosophy or code of conduct.

Example 6:

A woman who has been a resident at the service for three weeks has recently received a letter containing some bad news. She talks to you about the situation and her feelings. She shares with you that she has been an alcoholic but she has not had a drink of alcohol for three years. She now says she is going to go to the local hotel. While she is outside having a cigarette you discuss the situation with your supervisor who reminds you that it is the client’s choice to drink and that provided she does not return inebriated or bring alcohol into the service there is nothing you can do. You feel uncomfortable with this even though you understand that ultimately the decision about drinking is with the residents.

While you are agreeing with the organisation’s requirements you are actually testing your own values.

Activity 1

Imagine you are employed by Wyatt Springs Community Services which both operates residential care facilities and provides home-based care to people in the district. As previously stated, the organisation’s mission statement reads, in part:

> To provide supportive and effective care to citizens and their friends and families, while maintaining the highest ethical standards.

Scenario 1

Your supervisor catches you in the hallway as you are on the way to lunch. You have been working since 7.30 am without a break as it is a very busy day. You are very hungry and only have 30 minutes for your break. The supervisor says:

‘Run over to the front office with the grocery order. Someone forgot to put it in this morning and if we don’t get it over there soon, the residents won’t get their meals tonight’.

Would it be ethical to leave it until after your lunch break? What could you do instead?

Scenario 2

One of the clients in your care asks you to go to the bank for her and withdraw $200 from her account. She wants to give you her ATM access card and PIN so you don't have to queue up in the bank. She tells you:

'Keep $10 and treat yourself to a little something'.

How would you deal with this without offending the client but staying within the bounds of the organisation's philosophy and the need to work ethically?

Scenario 3

As an outreach worker with the Green family, you visit Peter at home in the mid-late afternoon each Tuesday. Peter's parents are keen to spend time with you and tell you their troubles. When you try to explain that you really need to get on with your work (talking to Peter) they become quite upset and make derogatory remarks about 'do gooders'.

What is the best way for you to fulfil your duties and avoid upsetting Peter's parents?

Communication and working ethically

For people to work well together at any level, there must be open communication within the organisation.

All members of an organisation need to understand its philosophy or ethos and it is the responsibility of the management to make this information accessible to its staff.

There are often 'unwritten rules' that are not a part of the organisation's formal policies and procedures.

Example 7:

It may be accepted within an organisation that supervisors always get the table by the window in the lunchroom. This is not part of the organisation's philosophy and will not be written down anywhere. It is just something that always happens.

It is in this kind of situation that communication comes to the fore. The new employee will eventually learn these things by observation. Unfortunately, they may 'tread on someone's toes' before they learn in this way. It is helpful for someone, usually a supervisor, to take a few minutes to point these things out.

Employees needs to feel that they can ask questions and seek explanation at any time without being brushed aside. This is particularly important if the employee is having a problem of some kind in carrying out their duties.

Whatever communication process is taking place, confidentiality is of prime importance, particularly when discussing clients/ residents and their background, situation, medical or other personal information.

There can be situations where maintaining confidentiality can pose an ethical dilemma, as in the following activity.

Activity 2

A client, Jason, has to take daily medication. Without his medication, he will have a seizure. He lives alone with no family living nearby and is prone to depression. When you are working with him you find one of his tablets on the floor. On closer investigation, you find a small paper packet tucked behind the telephone which contains a number of tablets. It appears that Jason has not taken all his tablets.

How can you deal with this while still respecting his right to privacy and confidentiality and working ethically in accordance with the organisation's policies and procedures?

You should now have more understanding of the concept of working ethically through examining codes of ethics and of practice, your own value system and the organisational goal. You have looked at legal issues, ethics and morals, as well as dealing with clients and communication in light of ethical work.

Activity responses

Activity 1 response

It is of course hard to give a 'correct' answer to these scenarios, as your answer will depend on your values and your concept of working ethically.

Scenario 1

Try to be upfront and honest with your supervisor. He/she may not be aware that you have not had a break all morning.

Scenario 2

You might:

- thank the client for the trust she has shown in you
- explain to the client that it is against organisational policy to use a client's Access Card and PIN, or to accept gifts
- explain the financial risks to the client that might result if she continues to trust people in this way
- speak to your supervisor about how the client can be assisted with banking and business needs.

Scenario 3

You might calmly and politely explain your job, and your need to meet your employer's expectations. If it is difficult to communicate in this way due to Peter's parents' reactions, talk with your supervisor about a referral for them to a carer support program.

Activity 2 response

This is a tricky one, but, where the health and well-being of a client is at risk, you have a duty of care which generally overtakes the client's right to privacy and confidentiality.

Explain to Jason the importance of his daily medication, and the risks of his failing to do so, ie: non-compliance, side effects, withdrawal symptoms.

Report your findings to your supervisor.

Respond appropriately to people who are vulnerable and at significant risk including children and young people (0586)

In this publication we will look at responding appropriately, and promptly, to people who are at significant risk, due to their age, their health status or their behaviours. This may include people in the following groups:

- people with a disability
- people with acquired brain injury
- elderly people
- people with a mental health disorder
- children and young people
- people who are homeless
- people in unequal power relationships
- people with drug/alcohol addiction.

We will look at intervention strategies for this group by considering a few specific examples. Clearly, the nature of your intervention will vary greatly from one group to another and also in regard to your role and that of your organisation. These examples will serve as a means of considering how to respond in more specific circumstances, in order to achieve the following:

- Assess the degree of risk, neglect or harm.
- Assess the priority need for intervention.
- Implement appropriate procedures to prevent escalation of any potential emergency or crisis situation.
- Respond appropriately to emergencies and crisis situations according to organisational procedures and in accordance with duty of care.
- Follow organisational policy and procedures and duty of care obligation in responding to indicators of actual or potential risk of abuse, neglect or harm.

AOD (alcohol and other drugs)

In order to address the issues related to this specific area, you will need to:

- acquire knowledge of specific harm minimisation practices
- acquire knowledge of the effects of AOD on the body system, on social relationships and the issues relating to AOD
- know the signs and symptoms of intoxication
- have knowledge of accepted practices and know which groups and agencies in the community can respond to individuals with AOD problems by providing treatment and detoxification programs
- be aware of any personal bias towards people with AOD problems
- be aware of your personal perspective on drug use, morally, and in terms of disease. be conscious of how this might influence the way you support a client with AOD problems
- be aware of the client's perspective on drug use, morally, and in terms of disease, how this affects their choices and how you feel about their perspective
- different referral agencies may offer different perspectives and approaches to AOD treatment. Be aware of how these impact in terms of the client's perspective.

Mental health disorder

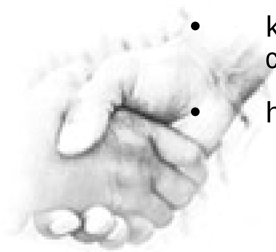
In order to support people with mental health issues, you will need to:

- be able to recognise the basic signs and symptoms of psychosis, anxiety, depression and suicidal impulses
- recognise other indicators of mental disorder, such as hallucinations, delusions, mood or behavioural change
- be able to identify the impact of issues related to mental health
- have knowledge of accepted practices and know the appropriate referral and intervention services in the community.

Domestic violence issues

Specific skills required when working in this area include:

- understanding that such violence is an abuse of power perpetrated both in a relationship and after separation,
- being aware that this type of abuse can take a number of forms, physical and sexual violence, emotional and psychological abuse and economic deprivation,
- recognising that domestic violence occurs across all groups, cultures and creeds,
- being aware that the safety and wellbeing of individuals subjected to domestic violence should be of primary concern,
- knowing accepted practices and which groups and agencies in your community can respond to individuals with domestic violence issues
- have the skills to identify the impact of issues relating to domestic violence.



Child protection

In order to address the issues related to this specific area, you will need to:

- know the relevant State mandatory reporting legislation and its application
- acquire knowledge of child development
- acquire knowledge of behavioural and physical indicators of abuse
- recognise that children in families experiencing difficulties, particularly where abuse of alcohol or other drugs occurs, are more likely to be at risk of abuse
- recognise that working with families and care givers to ensure the safety of children is a priority
- know accepted practices and which services within the community can respond to child protection issues
- be able to identify the impact of issues relating to child protection.

Developmental disability

Issues related to this specific area may require you to:

- know that the term 'developmental disability' may be used to describe individuals who have a multiplicity of disabilities, including difficulty learning, thinking and reasoning, retaining information and forming social relationships
- be able to recognise the individuality of people with disabilities, their right to age-appropriate consultation and to self-determination
- recognise the needs arising from social isolation and the impact of issues relating to developmental disability
- recognise the critical importance of primary care givers in the lives of people with a developmental delay
- know accepted practices and the groups and agencies in the community that can provide advocacy services as required.

Juvenile justice

In order to address the issues related to this specific area, you will need to:

- acquire knowledge of adolescent clients and their special needs as individuals, within families and as part of a group
- acquire knowledge of adolescent stages of development and the social issues affecting youth
- recognise the vulnerability of young people in their dealings with authority and of the protection that should operate during an investigation or proceeding in relation to an offence
- know accepted practices and which groups and agencies within the community can provide services such as advocacy and legal advice to young people in their dealings with the justice system
- be able to identify the impact of issues relating to juvenile justice.

Acquired brain injury (ABI)

Issues to be aware of include:

- being aware of the causes and effects of ABI
- understanding the impact of cognitive impairment on the individual and families and issues relating to ABI
- being aware of associated grief and loss issues
- acquiring knowledge of the ABI service system, accepted practices and agencies within the community that can provide support as required
- developing skills in working with people with challenging behaviours.

Sexual abuse

If you are working with children or adolescents, you will need to be aware of and knowledgeable about what constitutes sexual abuse, common indicators that sexual abuse is or has been an issue in a client’s life situation, your legal obligations regarding reporting incidents of disclosure regarding sexual abuse and appropriate avenues for referral for support.

You will need to be able to offer support in the immediate situation if a client makes a disclosure about sexual abuse. You will need to be able to deal with your own feelings and reactions to what is disclosed. If you are working with families, you may need to interact with the perpetrator, so it is important to consider how you might respond to this.

Dealing with sexual abuse is an enormous area and we cannot begin to give it comprehensive coverage within the scope of this publication. You will need to have knowledge of the impact of issues relating to sexual abuse and the available referral agencies able to provide support in this area.

Homelessness

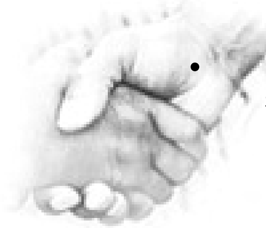
In order to address the issues related to this specific area, you will need to:

- be aware of causes, ie: identify the reason/s for homelessness
- be aware of the impact of issues relating to homelessness, including social isolation and associated emotional issues
- know which organisations within the community can provide necessary support services.

Unemployment

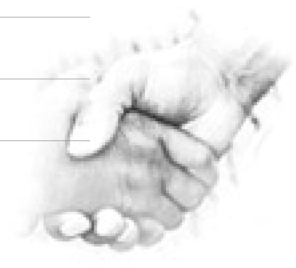
In order to address the issues related to unemployment you will need to:

- be able to identify the reason/s for unemployment
- be aware of the impact of issues relating to unemployment, including social isolation and associated emotional issues
- know which organisations within the community can provide necessary support services for those who are unemployed.



Activity 1

Make a list of the alcohol and other drugs/mental health services available in your region or locality with their names, addresses and telephone numbers and a brief summary of the services they offer.



In this publication we have looked at responding appropriately to people who are vulnerable and at significant risk, including:

- AOD (alcohol and other drugs) users
- those with mental health issues
- people in domestic violence situations
- children in need of protection
- those with developmental disability
- people within the juvenile justice system
- those with acquired brain injury (ABI)
- people with issues relating to sexual abuse
- those who are homeless
- those who are unemployed.

Activity responses

Activity 1 response

There is no 'right' or 'wrong' answer to this activities. Answers will vary according to your location.

Encourage individual decision making (0648)

In the following pages, we will look at how to encourage and understand individual choice and decision making and the client's right to self-determination.

Legislation has radically altered the way organisations and workers work with clients, in that it is no longer deemed acceptable to make decisions for, or on behalf of clients with disabilities. Rather, strategies and procedures must be put in place by organisations and service providers to actively involve clients in the decision-making process.

Some general guidelines to effect this process:

1. Develop a relationship with your client which enables a collaborative exploration of needs and choices.
2. Be aware that needs and issues change – build flexibility into planning and support, through provision of regular opportunities for review (both formal and informal) of planned goals, and modification as required.
3. Be conscious of how your own assumptions and beliefs might interfere with your client's involvement in decision making.
4. Be aware that you may not always agree with the client's decisions – provide information and input which enables them to understand their choices and options, but respect their right to make a choice which may not be in line with your own (or those of family members/support workers).
5. Provide opportunities for regular consultation with all involved parties (including family and support workers) to evaluate ongoing goals, and any issues arising.
6. Consult with your supervisor and other staff if you are unsure of how to deal with specific issues or situations.

Empower your clients to understand their rights with regard to decision making by:

- Providing them with relevant information, eg: written material that they can use as a reference.
- Encouraging them to meet with other clients, and to develop new support networks.
- Demonstrating your own commitment to involving them in all decisions.
- Providing regular opportunities for input and feedback.
- Being open to new ways of involving clients in planning and ongoing decision making.

The client's right to self-determination

As service providers it is our responsibility to ensure that the client's right to self-determination is protected. By self-determination we are referring to the client's right to make independent choices – to be empowered to live independently.

Principles of equity, elimination of poverty and optimal participation within the community must govern the way we work with clients. The client's right to make independent choices is part of this framework.

What are some indicators of a commitment to self-determination for your clients? Consider the following:

- Supporting the client to express their needs.
- Provision of information (in appropriate format, and at an appropriate level of complexity) to enable clients to make informed choices.
- Clarity of understanding of your own role in the client's situation.
- Clarity of understanding of the roles of others (eg: other services, family, support workers) in the client's situation.
- Following through on commitments.
- Open communication with the client.
- Supporting the client to develop networks for social and other purposes, to foster independence.
- Protecting the client's privacy and safety.
- Ensuring that you have the skills, knowledge and information required to meet the client's needs.
- A commitment to equity, demonstrated through actions which encourage the client's participation in the wider community.
- Seeking support when you require it, to ensure that the client's needs are understood and met.
- Advocating for the client when required, in order to uphold their right to make choices.

Acting on the decisions of people with disabilities

You have already learnt about the importance of making independent decisions to people with disabilities. It is just as important that these decisions are supported, followed through and acted on. Your role in enhancing the independence of people with disabilities may be to act on the decisions that they have made. In this role, you may find yourself:

- assisting clients to uphold their rights
- assisting clients in applying for positions of employment or in locating suitable positions of employment
- assisting clients in gaining information about further education or training that may be available
- locating information about things such as transport and access
- negotiating with other organisations or individuals on behalf of and in collaboration with your clients.

While acting on clients' decisions it must be under their direction with their consent. You must at all times ensure that you are acting on the decisions they have made for themselves and not on decisions others have made for them. While acting on clients' decisions it is important that you keep the following issues in mind:

- Always work within the guidelines provided by your organisation. Every organisation has written policies and procedures that address the standards that they must fulfil when providing a service. A policy is generally a statement that expresses the organisation's position in relation to specific issues. A procedure explains how the organisation and its workers implement a policy. Generally, policies and procedures guide you in your actions and help the organisation to remain accountable for the actions of its workers.
- As a support worker you should be aware of any relevant policies and procedures your organisation has. Working outside the organisation's policies and procedures may not only have detrimental effects on your client but may also have legal implications for you as the worker.
- Get to know any legal Acts and significant people. This is particularly important if you are acting on a client's decision that involves standing up for their rights. Legal Acts that may have an impact on your actions include:
  - Disability Discrimination Act 1993
  - Disability Services Act 1986
  - The Mental Health Act 1993.

  These and many other Acts may provide you with information to determine the course of action to take. It is also important that you get to know any significant people connected with your client, such as your client's advocate, their guardian, the Human Resource Officer at their place of work, or individuals employed in specific roles such as activists upholding the rights of individuals with disabilities.
- Provide your clients with accurate information. Factual information is information that is correct and relevant and can be used by your clients to improve their lifestyle or increase their level of independence. Factual information may be related to a variety of different issues, such as transport services, equipment or aids, or relevant services that may be available.

- Provide and encourage training for your clients. There will be many times when a decision your client has made requires them to learn new skills in order to act on their decision. Learning new skills or taking part in a training course can be frightening for anyone regardless of whether they have a disability. Your role may be to encourage them to take part in training and reassure them by pointing out the positive benefits of such training.

Example 1:

A group of six people with intellectual disabilities made the decision to begin operating a nursery. They needed assistance in legal and financial advice so, with the help of support workers, this was obtained. The aim of their nursery was to create a business and allow them to be financially independent, build up their confidence and regain a higher level of control over their lives.

Once they had completed all stages of preparation, the final legal requirement they had to fulfil before they could operate as a business was to ensure that they each underwent a first aid training course. The thought of having to pass a specific test was quite daunting for most of them. Together they agreed they would send along the two most competent in the group to a training session and see how they managed it. With encouragement and support from both support workers and the training officer, the two that participated in the first aid course passed with flying colours. They returned to the group proud of their accomplishment and each had a First Aid Certificate that could be framed and mounted on the wall of the office. Their success encouraged the other four members of the group to participate in an identical training course at a later date.

- While assisting your clients in acting on decisions they have made, you may be in charge of information that is considered confidential. Confidential information is private information about your client that should not be handed over to other persons without your client's consent.

Example 2:

Nadine is 26-years-old and has a mild intellectual disability. She currently lives at home with her parents and finds they are overprotective and will not allow her to gain independence. Nadine has made the decision that she would like to move out of home and is currently preparing herself to act on this decision. She has not told her parents of her plans.

Nadine is learning basic skills of living to ensure she can live independently. She is also learning to understand about financial security and has applied for many training courses to assist her in securing a job.

Nadine is also researching all of her options in relation to accommodation including independent living and shared residency. As a support worker, it is your role to assist Nadine in all of these activities and ensure she has the abilities required to be able to support herself independently. Nadine's desire to move out of her parent's home is confidential information. This means that other people should not be informed of Nadine's intentions unless Nadine specifically requests that they know.

A breach in confidentiality occurs when you do not keep information to yourself that you have been told in confidence. Breaches of confidentiality include:

- revealing any information about your client without their permission
- telling others information that you know your client would prefer to be kept confidential
- gossiping about your client
- revealing information that your client specifically asks you not to tell anyone
- giving information to any person who does not have the authority to have the information.

A serious breach of confidentiality would occur in Nadine's situation if you told her parents of Nadine's intention to move out of home. At this stage, Nadine is ensuring that she is capable of moving out of home before she acts on her decision. Due to the overprotective environment in which she currently lives, it is almost certain that her parents will not support her decision and this would be a crushing blow to her independence.

Understand any legal implications

If you are working with a child or a young person under the age of 18, then by law it is mandatory that you notify the Department of Family and Community Services of any abuse or suspected abuse situations. Your clients may request that you act on their decisions; however, if the reason for their decision is based on a situation of abuse, then by law you must notify the correct authorities. At times this can put a support worker in a difficult situation, as this legal requirement prevents them from maintaining client confidentiality. The laws regarding mandatory reporting override those around privacy and confidentiality in this instance, as minimising the risk of further abuse is paramount.

> Example 3:
>
> Kelly is 17-years-old with an intellectual disability. She currently lives in an institution and has decided she is unable to live there any more and would like you to assist her in moving to another form of accommodation. It eventually comes out that the reason she wants to move is because one of the workers is impatient with her and hits her if she doesn't do as she is told. Kelly begs you not to tell anyone. However, because of Kelly's age, it is mandatory that you notify the authorities of this situation.

It is important that you understand this and any other legal implications of your work, as failure to notify can result in you being punished by law. It may be law in your State to undertake training in relation to the mandatory reporting of abuse. You will need to check to see if this applies to you.

Activity 1

Find out what legal responsibilities disability support workers have in your State in regards to mandatory reporting.

1. Write them in the space provided below:

2. Where did you find this information?

3. Are the responsibilities of a disability support worker different than those of a nurse or teacher? If so, how?

Client participation in forums

Your clients may decide that they wish to participate in forums. This includes internal or external committees, seminars and conferences. It is important that you encourage and support your clients to take part in forums as this allows the individual the opportunity to express their opinions and ideas to others. The assistance your clients require may include immediate assistance or ongoing support. Immediate assistance includes support with transportation to and from the forum and ensuring accessibility at the forum. Ongoing assistance may involve supporting your clients in preparing to take part in a forum. This may include assisting clients in how to express themselves, taking part in further training, or providing your clients with information.

Assisting your clients in preparing to express themselves may include activities such as:

- role-playing situations whereby your clients present their views and opinions to you as an audience
- providing your clients with feedback on their methods of presentation and also present them with possible reactions to their suggestions
- assisting your clients in focusing on the issues of utmost importance
- suggesting examples that may explain more clearly the suggestions your clients wish to make
- encouraging your clients to plan their actions and words. Remember that some clients may use alternative methods of communication and may require the assistance of an interpreter at the forum.

In order for your clients to be able to participate effectively in forums, they may require further or ongoing training in areas like communication or interpersonal skills. Your role may be to assist them in these areas or to provide them with information about training available.

Your client may need to gather information to support their views or arguments that they wish to present at a forum. You can assist them by finding out what type of information they need, where they will be able to find this information, and determining the relevance of the information they locate.

The types of information that your clients may require and need assistance in locating may include published information, such as books or journals, or personal information gained by contacting individuals or organisations directly.

This information can be gained by:

- contacting libraries and/or specific organisations
- contacting councils or community services organisations
- contacting other individuals
- searching on the internet.

While assisting your clients to gather and compile information to support their argument, it is essential that the information they gain is relevant, accurate and up-to-date. It is important for you also to remember that your clients may make the decision to take part in a forum, but have no desire to voice their own opinions. In order to gain the most benefit from participating in a forum, your clients may still need to undergo some form of training and gather relevant information to assist them in understanding the issues being addressed at the forum.

In this publication we have looked at acting on the decisions of people with disabilities by encouraging and understanding:

- individual choice and decision making
- the client's right to self-determination.

Activity response

Activity 1 response

You may have responded in the following way:

1. Responsibilities will be similar across all States and Territories in Australia. Disability support workers have a legal requirement to report any actual or suspected abuse of any nature towards a person under the age of 18 years. Requirements for the type and timing of training in this area may vary.
2. You can find this information through government websites or by contacting government departments.
3. The responsibilities of anyone working with young people in a professional or voluntary capacity are the same.

Client self-determination in case management (1549)

Self-determination relates to that part of our behaviour which results from pursuing our own desires, choices and decisions. Most human beings have a capacity for self-determination. Most of us can make our own decisions, regardless of how negatively these decisions might be viewed by those around us.

Client self determination

Self-determination should be an underlying value in our work with clients. If the client's right to be self-determining underpins our approach to supporting them, then the resulting support will reflect the empowerment we would wish to offer them. Our role is to assist the client in exploring a wide range of choices – as many alternatives as may be possible, in order to increase their awareness and encourage them to make fully informed and independent decisions.

The degree to which a client's right to be self-determining can be upheld, will depend to a large degree on whether they have adequate knowledge to make appropriate and informed choices. In the case of a child, for example, this will certainly need to be considered.

In situations where you feel the client is not making informed choices, it may be your responsibility to make this clear to them, and then to assist in the process of research involved in reaching a more informed choice.

However, ultimately, it is the client's right also to reject the idea of gathering more information to make informed choices. They may not make the choices we wish them to. They may not make choices that reflect well on our practices.

It comes back to the same point – every individual has a right to determine the course their life will take.

In situations where you are required to make choices on behalf of a client, you must constantly be asking, whose problem it is, and who is being asked to resolve it.

By upholding the client's right to self-determination, and by supporting them to work towards this, you are upholding the principle which should be the foundation of your role in supporting others. What you do, empowers the client to move towards positive change and independence.

Activity 1

Consider what impact the age, experience, skills and values of your client have on their involvement in the case management meeting and the decision making process. How would you go about accommodating differences in the following instances?

1. Your client is a 14-year-old girl who has never previously been referred to an agency for support. She has just lost both her parents in a car accident. She has no siblings.

2. Your client is 68 years old and has recently suffered brain injury as a result of a stroke. Although he can understand what is said to him, he speaks mostly in unintelligible 'babble', with only the occasional clear word. His wife is his main carer. He was previously a radio announcer on a national radio station – an articulate, erudite and intelligent man. He frequently becomes distressed by his lack of ability to express his thoughts.

3. Your client is an Aboriginal man in his early thirties. He has only recently arrived in the city. He has never been to a city before, and has spent most of his life in a settlement in a remote region of the Northern Territory. He has been referred to you by the police, who have charged him with drunk and disorderly behaviour after he threw a rock through the window of an antique shop. He was distressed because he was unable to read the signs or find his way in the city. He does not have a place to stay. He has come to find his brother.

4. Your client is a six year old child, who was removed from her parents and placed in foster care two years ago. Her foster parents are also present at the meeting.

You need to consider how this will be managed in each individual case, particularly if the client is not of an age, or does not have the skills and/or experience to act with confident independence in the meeting process, and also consider that your client and their needs must remain the main focus during the course of a case management meeting.

Impacts on a client's ability to act independently and with confidence in a meeting process may include the following factors:

- Age of client.
- Degree of experience with meeting procedures.
- Ability of the client to understand what is being discussed, particularly if there is a lot of 'professional speak', or an assumed knowledge of jargon terms, eg: 'monitoring and evaluation', 'duty of care', 'mandated client', or any other professional terms.
- Emotional state of your client. If your client has experienced traumatic circumstances, a meeting forum may be overwhelming. Always remember, deal with the crisis first. Process aside, do not expect to be able to discuss action plans with a distressed client who can see nothing past their immediate circumstances.
- Intellectual ability of your client. If your client has an intellectual disability, ensure you are clear about their level of comprehension of language and events. Check their ability to communicate, verbal or otherwise. If you are unsure, gather background information from relevant professionals previously involved with your client.
- Relationship of your client to their carers. If your client is unable to speak or to make choices on their own behalf, it may fall to carers (eg: parents, partner, etc) to make decisions for them. Try and be aware of the relationship that exists between your client and their carers. Try and ascertain whether the carer is, in fact, speaking in the best interest of the client. Ensure that your client consents to the carer speaking on their behalf. Your ultimate responsibility still rests with the client.
- Cultural background of the client. Meetings are a foreign world at the best of times; there is a language, a formality, a code of conduct that applies to meetings that can be daunting even to the most experienced of us. If there are added difficulties related to language, or meeting practices which violate certain cultural understandings, you need to be sensitive to these and accommodate them in whatever way you can. This may involve appointing an interpreter to assist your client, or going through the procedures that are likely to occur prior to the meeting to familiarise the client with what might be involved. It also requires you to do your homework regarding the cultural differences that may make the process difficult for your client.
- Previous traumatic experiences in a therapy or support situation, or negative experiences of meeting procedures. You may have a client who has been involved in many agencies over many years. They may have developed a certain cynicism about the processes involved and the likelihood of positive, constructive outcomes.

- How is this likely to impact on your dealings with the client? What could you do to make the situation as positive as possible for the client? Try and be empathetic to their situation. Try and gain some knowledge about what has happened for them previously.
- On a positive note, consider your client's strengths. You may be working with a client who is quite able to express their needs. Whatever your client's situation, they will demonstrate skills and attributes, and it is important to highlight these and to use them, both during the planning process and to achieve outcomes. Building on what is there will empower the client; it will give the client confidence in their ability to achieve and encourage them to view their situation from a positive ('half-full') rather than negative ('half-empty') perspective.

This publication has discussed the importance of client self-determination. This includes:

- determining whether the client is capable of making informed choices
- assisting the client in the process of researching in order to make a more informed choice
- upholding the client's right to self-determination.

Activity response

Activity 1 response

For each of the scenarios you should have asked yourself these questions:

- What is the purpose of the meeting?
- What are your expectations of the meeting?
- What are the desired outcomes of the meeting?
- How will the client benefit from the meeting?

You may have considered the following responses for the given scenarios:

1. For the 14-year-old girl, you could:
   - involve girl in the decision-making process
   - give her what options are available from the agency's perspective
   - ask her to offer opinions she may have
   - explain that although she knows what she wants, the final decision may not be exactly that
   - explore possibilities, eg: other family or friends that could care for her
   - offer the opportunity for choices in the final decision making process
   - offer grief counselling.

2. For the 68-year-old man, you could:

   – hold meeting in a safe and familiar environment

   – make meeting times when the client is at his best, according to medical staff/wife

   – get his consent before speaking to his wife

   – find new ways to communicate with him. Ask questions that require a yes/no answer. The client can blink x 2 for yes and x 1 for no

   – inform him of processes.

3. For the Aboriginal man in his early thirties, you could:

   – contact Aboriginal services

   – organise accommodation, interpreter, lawyer

   – hold meetings at a place organised by the Aboriginal services

   – follow the lead of Aboriginal services in support of this man.

4. For the six-year-old child in foster care, you could:

   – think about appropriateness of the child being present at a case meeting. A child advocate would be preferable

   – ensure the advocate interviews child, makes an assessment and brings only relevant information to the meeting

   – ensure the child advocate speaks to the child and explains the outcome.

Select appropriate research strategies (1113)

This publication will discuss research strategies. It will look at:

- considering how you will manage the project
- choosing your research tools
- understanding what qualitative and quantitative research is
- using the ethical approach to research
- ensuring research displays cultural sensitivity
- understanding what good research design is.

Project management

There are certain aspects of project management you need to consider before you can begin to design your research methodology, because they impact on the types of research which will best suit your project in terms of resources. The five major aspects you need to consider include:

1. Getting a perspective on the size of your project

   This means being very clear about why you are embarking on the research, and who you are doing it for. It means looking at what time frames are already in place, who wants the information by when, what budgeting deadlines you might have to work within and what other projects or team meetings you might have to work around.

   It is at this stage that you should investigate the literature. Find out what aspects of the issues have been investigated in previous studies, how they went about it, and what they found. This will help to direct you in your own investigations and give you some idea of the scope of what you are trying to achieve.

2. Working out a time frame

   Knowing how much time is available will give you some idea of the limitations of what you are trying to achieve. What is realistic? What will be the most effective way of investigating the issue given the time constraints that you have?

It might pay to consider how much time it will take to complete your research by working on a formula, eg:

– The time it will take to collect your data.
– The time it will take to analyse and investigate your findings.
– The time it will take to write it up.
– The time it will take to circulate your findings, obtain feedback and instigate action.

3. Looking at available resources

Resources may include:

– people (how many you might need versus how many are available, and how much time they can realistically offer)
– materials, eg: stationery, computers, photocopying, printing, access to telephones, office space, tape recorders, layout and collating facilities.

4. Working out responsibilities in terms of overall project management

If there are a number of parties involved in your research, it may be valuable to form a committee comprising representatives from these groups, in order to manage the overall project with consideration to each party's interests. As with any other community service meeting forum, it is essential to keep accurate records of meeting procedures and outcomes, outlining decisions made, time frames for proposed actions and delegation of tasks.

5. Money/funding

Money may be available through your agency to at least partially fund your research project. However, it may be necessary in some instances to look into the option of applying for a grant to assist with funding.

In some cases you may be able to seek the support of volunteer groups, or other interested parties who offer their support in terms of time or resources.

Activity 1

Find out about the availability of grants for research in the area of community services. List and describe five sources.

Research methods – choosing your tools

Research design refers to your overall plan, the 'how to' of getting your questions answered. As you will see there are a number of methods which you might employ. Methods are the tools of research. The tools you choose in order to research your question will depend on:

- What 'fits' the question you wish to investigate. It may be necessary to consider a combination of methods in order to fully investigate your question. You need to look at each possible research method and work out which provides you with the right kind of information, and the right amount of information.
- Your capabilities (which methods you have the skills to use).
- Time and money constraints.
- The number of people involved, both in terms of researchers, and those you are researching the issues for.

A note on quantitative and qualitative research

All research falls roughly within these two groups. It is important to have some idea of what these terms mean in order to help you identify what kind of information you are seeking and which methods are most likely to assist you in obtaining it.

Quantitative research is based on scientific method. It seeks to explain information by testing theories against measurable data. An example would be statistical information obtained from the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Qualitative research makes interpretations from the data itself, without relying on existing knowledge. An example would be the information you obtain from interviews, in which participants can discuss their points of view, their beliefs and attitudes and their needs. Qualitative research involves exploring more subjective information. It provides you with information of a different nature to quantitative research.

In many instances, your research will result in obtaining both these types of information.

Let us begin by considering some research methods. These methods are, fundamentally, ways of 'finding out', of obtaining the information we need to answer our questions. You will have heard many of these terms before, eg: surveys, evaluation and community studies. Each of these methods might involve using a range of specific techniques, eg: interviewing, questionnaires and observation, in order to achieve their aim. We will look at methods first, and then in more detail at techniques.

A question of ethics...

Before we focus attention on research methods, eg: how to get the information, it is worth considering the issue of research ethics. This is defined as principles, standards or rules that are set out by specific communities including social workers or medical practitioners. They are a framework for guiding action.

Why do we need standards in research? Because research is a process of finding out, and we 'find out' in a social context, not in isolation. Inevitably, ethical issues will arise.

It is ethical practice in any research on Indigenous issues to consult and negotiate throughout the research process. Ongoing consultation is necessary to ensure informed consent for the proposed project and in maintaining that consent.

Consultation

Consultation between agencies needs to be a continuous process which adheres to the agreed practices and protocols of all involved parties. Consultation involves honest exchange of information including aims, methods and potential outcomes. Being fully informed about such aspects of the project allows agencies, groups and individuals to decide whether to oppose or to embrace the project.

> Example 1:
>
> ---
>
> In the early 1960s, Stanley Milgram carried out research designed to reveal under what conditions people would obey authority. In a simulated setting, participants were ordered to inflict pain and suffering on others.
>
> The rationale for the research was to better understand how seemingly ordinary people could commit horrific crimes under the guise of ‘following orders’, eg: those working in the Nazi death camps.
>
> The research raised a number of issues, including that of informed consent. The study was only possible because Milgram deceived those participating. Milgram pointed out that deception was necessary to carry out the research, and given the significance of the research, the deception was justified.

> Example 2:
>
> ---
>
> In a recent study (‘Any Which Way You Can’, by Rob White), an Australian researcher carried out research into how young people survived on marginal ‘official’ incomes. In undertaking the research, White came across a number of ethical issues, including what to do with information that revealed a number of young people were surviving financially through illegal means. Should he disclose the illegal activity? What if he chose to maintain confidentiality, and his records were subpoenaed?
>
> He revisited the research and coded all responses anonymously, with no way of cross-referencing identifying features, and responses.
>
> (White, R with Aumair, M, Harris, A & McDonnell, L 1997, Any Which Way You Can: youth livelihoods, community resources and crime, Australian Youth Foundation, Sydney.)

A number of professions have developed Codes of Practice (sometimes known as Codes of Ethics) to address ethical issues, in both general practice and the practice of research. As well as professional associations, eg: the Australian Association of Social Workers, the National Health and Medical Research Council has developed codes of practice for medical research, and more general research. They are a statutory authority responsible for funding health-related research.

Activity 2

Take a look at three Codes of Practice (generally, Codes of Practice are available on the Internet). What are the similarities? What are the differences? The following are offered as starting points:

- Australian Association of Social Workers.
- Australian Psychological Association.
- Australian Journalist's Association.
- Australian Press Council.
- Australian Medical Association.

Regardless of the discipline, an ethical approach to research has four common components.

1. Informed consent

   Most codes recognise the principle of informed consent. This dates back to the Nuremberg Trials, at the end of World War II. Nazi doctors were accused of conducting unethical, and often horrific, experiments on prisoners of war. The first point in the Nuremberg Code, which came out of the trials, spelled out the principle that all research should be voluntary; and that all subjects should know of any risks involved. In practise, this can be a little more complicated. What do we consider 'informed'? Who can give consent? How old do they have to be? Can someone else give consent on behalf of another, eg: school-aged children? With young people, do parents need to be informed?

2. Prevention of deception

   This principle is the counterpart to the principle of informed consent. The prevention of deception concerns not misleading the research subject about the purpose of the research project. The field of research literature is littered with research findings based on deception, eg: research into marginalised groups, such as the Ku Klux Klan and Hell's Angels; deception-based research on male homosexual practices in public toilets; etc. To deceive clients is to break one of the tenets of ethical research.

3. Confidentiality

The issue of privacy and confidentiality is of increasing importance in society. New privacy laws reinforce just how significant these issues are, particularly in the era of electronic communication and ever expanding databases.

From the perspective of research, confidentiality refers to:

– keeping the subject anonymous

– keeping all information confidential

– ensuring all information is kept secure

– collecting only information relevant to the research.

Confidentiality should be considered a basic condition of any person agreeing to participate in research. In some research contexts, this is extended to an agreement to destroy data after a certain period of time.

4. Avoidance of harm

The fourth ethical tenet is the avoidance of harm. 'Harm' refers to both physical and psychological harm. Psychological harm includes:

– embarrassment

– humiliation

– stress.

As you can see, some research, eg: Milgram's (Example 1), would contravene the ethical guideline of 'no harm', particularly relating to psychological harm.

Cultural sensitivity

Cultural sensitivity (or insensitivity) is related to ethical issues in research. Constructing culturally sensitive tools for finding out is particularly important when some of the research group may not speak English well, if at all. There are ways around this issue:

1. Use bilingual interviewers.
2. Translate the materials into the language of the research group.
3. Pilot the materials to make sure they use appropriate language.

Example 3:

Two American researchers were trying to translate an interview schedule from English to Chinese. The interviews were to be conducted in a regional Chinese centre. Their first problem was in translating the language from English into a non-standardised and non-written dialect. Their second problem was in translating concepts contained in the interview schedule. For example, one of the questions asked, 'Have you ever felt proud of...'. In piloting the schedule, they realised the culture in which they were asking the question valued humility – it was considered a virtue. Consequently, it was impossible to gauge an accurate response to the question.

One suggestion in developing culturally sensitive research is to spend a reasonable time immersing yourself in the culture of the research population *before* interviewing or developing questionnaires. Pilot the research instrument and seek consultation from those in the community.

Activity 3

What might be three cultural considerations in conducting research with a remote Aboriginal community?

What is good research design?

Time to take stock again. We have covered a lot of ground in terms of options for research. Regardless of the method you choose, the important thing is that you design your research with care. To sum up, then, let us look at what constitutes good research design.

Good research design includes:

- Being clear in its focus and defining the issues it wishes to address.
- Clearly stating its intent.
- Clearly defining questions.
- Seeking to employ methodology which will be effective in investigating its proposed questions.
- Taking into account the available resources in terms of staffing, finance and time, and seeking to find the most effective methodology within these constraints.
- Acknowledging the needs of all stakeholders and being inclusive in terms of seeking input.
- Being committed to providing honest and accurate data.
- Being designed in a way which results in recommendations for action.

This publication has looked at selecting and using research strategies which are appropriate to the client group, the subject matter being researched, the resources available and the outcomes sought within an ethical framework.

Activity responses

Activity 1-2 response

Answers will vary according to your situation. You may find it useful to discuss your responses to these activities with other students or with your facilitator.

Activity 3 response

Some cultural considerations you may have identified:

- need for bilingual interviewers
- ensuring written material has appropriate language
- need to have an awareness of gender issues
- awareness of group customs, eg: use of eye contact
- need for permission of elders before speaking with the community
- ensuring the place of meeting is the choosing of the elders, and the time is appropriate to community business
- whether you have been invited or are self-imposing – it takes time to build trusting relationships.

Monitoring and evaluation in community services (1903)

This publication looks at monitoring and evaluation in order to enhance the overall service an organisation offers. Who is responsible for monitoring the effectiveness of a service in its delivery? How do we know that a project or program has met its aims and objectives?

Monitoring and evaluation are essential to the process of service improvement. They allow us to answer the critical organisational questions – are we achieving what we set out to achieve and how do we know?

Monitoring is about keeping watch, of an aspect of operations, or the overall wellbeing of the organisation as a whole. It is an ongoing process. Evaluation usually occurs at the completion of a program or project.

These processes establish a variety of outcomes, which may include:

- achievement of results and tasks
- assessment of client satisfaction
- assessment of staff satisfaction or performance
- accountability of responsible persons.

Examples of strategies include:

- collecting or compiling evidence or data
- collating or sorting evidence or data
- analysing evidence or data
- determining strengths
- reaching conclusions
- identifying weaknesses
- writing up results or reports
- exploring options for continuous improvement.

These can be used alone or in combination with each other, depending on the focus and depth of the evaluation.

Program evaluation: what is it?

In the case of program evaluation, evaluation serves to discover whether that program:

- meets its outcomes
- is effective.

As an ideal, evaluation should start in the program planning phase, continue during the program and conclude after the program has wound up.

In some senses, the ‘conclusion’ of the evaluation process is the write-up of program recommendations and the preparation for the next program. Again we are talking about a cyclical process.

Why program evaluation?

Can you think of reasons, from your own experience both as coordinator and participant in a program, why programs need to be evaluated? Program evaluation does a number of things for an organisation:

- keeps the program designers/presenters focused on their task
- provides information – based on which you can make decisions about different aspects of the program, ie: What went well? What could we do better? How? What resources do we need to make these changes?
- provides us with an ‘accountability measure’
- gives opportunity for participant/client input
- gives us data on major accomplishments
- provides data to be used as the basis for future programs and possibly for future funding
- provides opportunity for staff input, eg: discussion during a staff meeting about an advocacy and representation project.

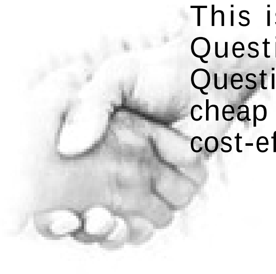
Methods of program evaluation

There are a number of methods for collecting evaluation data. Following are a few examples, with some notes regarding advantages and disadvantages of each. It is important to note that in some projects several methods will be used, while in others none of these examples will be used.

> Example 1:
>
> When evaluating the effectiveness of a lobbying delegation, it would be appropriate to discuss outcomes in specific meetings.

Questionnaires

This is one of the most common methods of evaluating community programs. Questionnaires can follow a range of formats: open-ended, closed, scales, etc. Questionnaires have certain advantages. They can be mailed after the program, are cheap to administer, can be pre-coded, allow coverage of wide geographic areas, are cost-effective and (in most cases) respondents remain anonymous.



Some of the disadvantages include – poor response rate, often incomplete, lack flexibility and (in some cases) are inappropriate if target client group has literacy/numeracy difficulties.

Interviews

This is another common evaluation method. Interviews can be either face-to-face, or by phone. Interviews have the advantage of being more complex and a more sensitive evaluation method. They produce greater detail, they can be altered as needed, eg: if a client does not understand a question and they have a high response rate.

Some of the disadvantages of interviews are: time (they are time-consuming), cost and the need for more highly skilled staff to gather the evaluation data.

Observations

Observation involves watching participants/clients in actual or simulated settings and recording the knowledge, skills and attitudes displayed, in order to ascertain whether they are able to achieve the objectives, as outlined in the program plan.

Tests

Tests may be oral, pen-and-paper, short answer, essay, multiple choice – the aim being to see what knowledge participants have gained from the program.

Portfolios

A collection of work, assembled over time, that gives evidence of the client/participant achieving program objectives. For example, a participant's portfolio (at the end of their three-week intensive job search program) might include: a high-quality résumé (two versions), application letters (for three different industries), current employee references, sequenced official academic transcripts and collated job specifications for the industry of their choice.

Cost-benefit analysis

This involves an analysis of the outcomes of the program and the costs required to produce those outcomes. For example, the cost-per-participant for three week intensive job search (12 participants in each program) is $500. This includes hiring of staff, room hire, infrastructure, administration, etc.

The outcomes for the last three job search programs have seen 20 clients into fulltime work, six clients in part-time work and five returning to further study.

Organisational records

Written records, including absenteeism, performance appraisals, financial records, training time/participants involved. Some organisations provide clients with (confidential) client feedback/evaluation forms which are passed on to management.

The purpose of evaluation

Program evaluation serves a range of purposes. One of the main purposes of program evaluation is to use the information obtained to make recommendations for revision and ongoing development of programs.

Program recommendations can cover any (or all) of the following program areas:

- planning
- delivery
- staffing
- resourcing (administrative support, venue, etc)
- content
- outcomes
- evaluation – alternative strategies, omissions, problems with format, need for piloting of questionnaires, etc.

When you are considering the results of a program evaluation, it is important to consider not only what worked, but also what didn't. Ask yourself, why not? What could you do differently next time? What has been learned from the experience?

Who to involve in evaluation

Evaluation is a collaborative process. It should involve anybody that is involved in a process, or a program. It may therefore include any of the following:

- staff
- clients
- program participants
- funding bodies
- members of the community
- community leaders
- committee of management
- other stakeholders.

Feeding back the information

Why do we give feedback? Why is it important?

Feedback is important in the work context for one very simple reason – we influence people's performance by the giving and receiving of feedback. We can influence the workings of an organisation by offering feedback about aspects of service delivery, specifically:

- How do we know we are doing any good?
- Who do we get feedback from?

Activity 1

Consider the following scenario and answer the questions that follow.

Your organisation has recently moved to new premises. You and a number of other ‘hands on’ staff have become aware of certain inadequacies with the site. Firstly, you saw a client who uses a wheelchair, who could not find access by which she could enter the building. Other staff have complained about the inadequate number of toilets for clients and inadequate privacy in some of the designated meeting rooms.

1. How do you gather the necessary information about these inadequacies?
2. Who do you give this feedback to?
3. Who is responsible for this process?

Models of evaluation

The following examples relate to organisation programs, projects and services.

Open enquiry

The open enquiry approach asks the following types of questions:

1. How are we (this group/this program/the policy development process) going?
2. What is working well? In what way?
3. What is the value in what we are doing?
4. What is not working well? What are the indicators that it is not working well?
5. What could we do better?
6. What are we doing right that we could do more of?

This approach could be seen as more exploratory in its purpose and therefore more able to provide the starting point for new ways of thinking and doing.

Performance review

A second model of monitoring uses performance review, or performance appraisal.

It poses three questions. Is the organisation:

- Efficient, ie: how well is the organisation using resources (often described in input/output terms) for instance, dollars per client?
- Effective, ie: how well is the organisation meeting its objectives?
- Appropriate?

The audit review

The audit review is the more conventional method of evaluation. It discusses practice in relation to objectives. It asks the following questions:

1. What were our objectives, ie: what did we set out to achieve?
2. Did we achieve those objectives?
3. How do we know, ie: what are the measures of achievement?
4. What are we not doing that we could be doing?
5. What are we doing that we shouldn't be doing?

Regardless of the monitoring/evaluation methodology or model we employ, evaluation processes serve three important functions:

1. They ask the question: 'Have we done what we set out to do?'
2. They form the basis for future strategy. In this sense, the process monitoring and evaluation is both a final step and a first step in a new (and cyclical) process.
3. They serve as an accountability measure. They provide the evidence of a job well done. They also provide the evidence of things that are not working as well as they could.

Evaluation and monitoring are about identification of issues and of successes. But who is responsible for collecting this information? And who does it need to be given to?

> Example 2:
>
> Maggie is a youth worker employed at a Youth Training Centre. In addition to her role, she has voluntarily taken on the position of chair of the Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) sub-committee.
>
> To date, the sub-committee has authorised an ongoing series of four training sessions for staff, conducted by a Board member with past experience with a State Safety Council. The program has continued, although Maggie has become increasingly aware of the resentment of staff at having to attend.

Maggie decides it is time to undertake some evaluation processes with the sub-committee. She begins with a series of very basic questions:

- What are the program objectives (what are we trying to achieve)?
- Is the program meeting these objectives?
- Is it effective?
- How do we know?
- Is there anything we could be doing to better deliver this program?

The response of the sub-committee is not exactly enthusiastic. The general feeling is that the program has to continue (so as not to offend the involved Board member), because the Board have requested it and as for objectives – who knows? They've never been put into writing. Is there really a need for evaluation?

Service evaluation

In addition to monitoring an evaluation of organisations, projects and programs, we also need to monitor and evaluate client service delivery.

Evaluating community service provision is very important as it allows community service organisations and case management teams to assess the effectiveness of services they provide to clients. To ensure that the most appropriate support, assistance and services are provided, evaluation needs to be continually conducted.

During evaluation of the service plan it is possible to monitor whether goals or objectives have been achieved, or if improvements need to be made to better achieve these. Through the process of evaluation, successful strategies will be highlighted and any deficiencies or omissions in the service plan, or in the service delivery strategy, will become apparent. Changes or modifications will need to be considered in the event that care is not as effective as planned.

In some cases an evaluation can provide evidence of further client needs or issues that need to be addressed by the case management team. This can be helpful for addressing weaknesses identified in the service plan as well as for enhancing the strengths of the process.

Because clients receive community care services and assistance according to a service plan, it is essential that their progress is continually monitored and that changes are made to reflect an improvement or decline in the client's condition.

Methods of evaluation include:

- using a checklist to record client's responses
- direct observation
- discussion with the client or their representative
- assessing whether goals and objectives have been achieved
- assessing to what extent goals and objectives have been achieved
- suggesting modifications, adaptations or alternatives to the existing service plan or particular aspects of the service plan.

Following an evaluation, a client may need to be reassessed. This will ultimately result in changes and modification to the service plan based on the information gathered during the evaluation process and in accordance with organisational policies and procedures. Thus the support cycle begins again, allowing the client service plan to remain a dynamic document that is changed, adapted and modified to accommodate a client's most pressing needs.

Activity 2

Consider the model above. The client whose services are being evaluated has problems with the manner in which services are provided to them.

Write down six ways by which an advocate could contribute to this service evaluation process. Think about the skills they need to facilitate the emergence of a win-win situation.

Collaborative evaluation

Remember that many of our community service clients are going to require collaborative care to best meet their needs. Collaborative evaluation occurs between people with different interests or values, but who have enough common ground to be able to work together.

In this case the common ground is meeting the needs of the client in an environment of holistic care practice using individualised care. In this way the different perspectives of the service providers can be understood and explored. Whilst there may be issues of conflict and imbalances of power, the value of this exercise is that the involvement of all parties ensures that they all experience the evidence and arguments for practice change to benefit the client.

Activity response

Activity 1 response

1. Determine the legislative requirements and expectations.

2. Using an evaluation tool, indicate the areas that you have monitored as needing improvement.

   You might use the assistance of other staff, clients or program participants to help identify the errors.

3. Feed the evaluation to your supervisor or organisation OH&S representative.

   The employer (CEO) of the organisation has ultimate responsibility with the overall OH&S of all staff, clients and participants. It is the OH&S representative's responsibility to maintain that standards are adhered to, but you (as a staff member) or clients can help to identify hazards and report them to the appropriate people.

Activity 2 response

Answers will vary according to your situation. You may find it useful to discuss your responses with other students or with your facilitator.