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Edmonton Council of Community Services

SOCIAL SERVICE
EXCHANGE
HANDBOOK

EDMONTON COUNCIL
of
COMMUNITY SERVICES
10128 - 98 St.
Phone 28876
A RED FEATHER SERVICE

EDMONTON COUNCIL OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

SOCIAL SERVICE EXCHANGE HANDBOOK

WHY DO WE HAVE A SOCIAL SERVICE EXCHANGE?

The purpose of our Social Service Exchange is to provide a central service to health and welfare organizations in Edmonton through which they can, when a family or individual applies for assistance, learn quickly and easily if any other agency is already assisting (or has assisted) the family. Such a service is of value to the client, to the social agencies, and to the community.

It helps the client by providing the worker with information which reduces the possibility of duplication, conflict in plans for the family, or misunderstanding in a time of stress.

It helps a worker in an agency by indicating where information might be available which would help him to render speedy and worthwhile assistance to the client. Such information may also help the worker obtain a background-knowledge of the family or individual thus enabling him to give better service and to avoid service which is unnecessary, or a duplication of that already being given.

Such a service is important to the community as it makes it possible for agencies to co-operate quickly and efficiently, prevents overlapping and duplication of services and ensures better and more efficient services.

WHO OPERATES AND FINANCES THE SOCIAL SERVICE EXCHANGE?

The Social Service Exchange is operated by the Edmonton Council of Community Services and is located in the offices of the Council, 10128-98th Street. The Exchange is a Red Feather Service, financed by the Community Chest. It is under the general direction of the Executive Director who in turn is responsible to the Board of Directors of the Council. A Social Service Exchange Committee, composed of representatives of the agencies using the Exchange, assists the Director and the Board in an advisory capacity.

The Exchange is essentially an index file with a card (or cards where cross-reference is necessary) for every family (or individual) registered by any agency. Each card carries only information which is necessary for accurate identification, (e.g. surname, given names, woman's maiden name, names of children, ages, addresses, etc.) and a list of the agencies who have registered and the date of that registration. The Exchange card carries no other information about the family or individual. It simply indicates where information may be obtained.

WHO MAY USE THE SOCIAL SERVICE EXCHANGE?

Any bona-fide health or welfare agency serving the citizens of the Edmonton district may become a member of the Social Service Exchange provided:

1. That the Agency keeps records which may contain data useful to other agencies.
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2. That the agency has as its primary purpose the welfare of its clients; that its work is socially important; that it is properly empowered to carry on this work and is capable of handling it.
3. That the agency agrees to safeguard confidential information.
4. That the agency agrees to communicate and co-operate with any other member-agency regarding a client in which they are both interested.

NOTE: This does not imply that the agency forfeits control over its own record material. As set forth below each agency is the custodian of its own records and is solely responsible for giving or withholding information, the determining factor being the client's welfare which must always remain paramount.

HOW DO AGENCIES USE THE EXCHANGE?

Most agencies find it helpful to clear each application for service with the Exchange as soon as possible-- (in the welfare of the client it is usually advisable to do this before making a decision as to whether or not service should be provided.) This procedure is known as "enquiry". This may be done by telephoning the Exchange - 28876, giving the name of the agency and the name of the worker calling, followed by as much identifying information as is available. If the Exchange operator is certain of the identity of the party calling she may search the files and report immediately. Her instructions are, however, if for any reason she is not certain of the identity to say that she will search the files and call back. This is a precaution to protect the confidential nature of the Exchange and to ensure that information is given only to bona-fide members of the Exchange.

When an agency has decided to provide service for the client necessary identifying information should be "registered" with the Exchange as soon as possible on the registration form supplied by the Exchange. (see sample in Appendix A). Please give as much accurate identifying information as possible, paying particular attention to other possible spellings of a name and any alias known. The registration form is then sent to the Exchange in duplicate. When received the Exchange operator will search the files in the same way as for an enquiry. If the client has been registered previously the duplicate copy will be returned to you with a list of agencies and the dates on which they registered, and your agency's registration will be added to the index card. It is then your responsibility to clear with these other agencies. If the case has not been registered previously a new card will be made out and your duplicate will be marked "NO RECORD" and returned to you.

Accurate information and speed in enquiring and registering are essential to efficient operation of the Exchange.

WHAT RESPONSIBILITY HAS AN AGENCY IN RECEIVING INFORMATION FROM ANOTHER?

If you ask for information from another agency already registered it is your responsibility to explain the kind of assistance which has been requested by your client and the kind of information you wish. It is the responsibility of the registered agency to decide on what information is relevant and can be shared.

ANY AGENCY RECEIVING INFORMATION FROM A REGISTERED AGENCY MUST NOT PASS THIS INFORMATION ON TO A THIRD AGENCY AS EACH AGENCY MUST RETAIN THE RIGHT TO INTERPRET ITS OWN INFORMATION AS IT SEES FIT, ALWAYS KEEPING THE WELFARE OF THE CLIENT THE PRIMARY CONSIDERATION.