5. Working with clients

Contents

5.4 Day-to-day client matters

Acknowledgments

The section *Working with clients* has been written using a number of manuals as source material. We gratefully acknowledge this input.

The main resource used for the case management section is National Case Management Working Group 1997, *Case Management Resource Kit for SAAP Services, Section 4*

The main resources used for the Working with children and Child protection sections are various policies provided by Jenny's Place Inc. Women and Children's Refuge

Other resources used include:

NSW Women's Refuge Movement 1999, *An Open Door — NSW Women's Refuge Movement Access and Equity Manual* NSW Women's Refuge Resource Centre Inc, Sydney

Upper Hunter Community Services Policy Group 1999, *Policy and Procedure Register*, Muswellbrook Shire Council

Western Sydney Sole Women's Accommodation Service 2001, *Policy and Procedure Manual*

Youth Coalition of the ACT Inc., *Policy and Procedures Manual*

5.3 Case management

5.1.1 Case management

Primary responsibility

Management and all support staff

Policy

- (*Insert name*) Refuge uses a case management model of working with clients that is guided by the model developed by the National SAAP Case Management Project.
- (*Insert name*) Refuge adopts the definition and understanding of case management developed by the National SAAP Case Management Project. This definition is included at the end of this policy.
- (*Insert name*) Refuge acknowledges that case management is client driven. The extent to which it is undertaken will depend upon the client's wishes and their level of commitment to the process.
- (*Insert name*) Refuge will use interpreters (community language and Auslan) where required for effective case management.
- (*Insert name*) Refuge will follow the eight elements of the case management model, namely entry/screening, assessment, planning, direct service, coordination, monitoring and review, exit planning and case follow-up and evaluation.
- (*Insert name*) Refuge will use the SAAP Case Management manual to help with case management of women with alcohol and/or other drug issues (*A&E Resolution 82*).

Procedure

- Maintain a list of all past and current clients in a computer database.

(*Insert name*) Refuge uses the following forms for case management:

Request for Information from People with a Mental Illness

Assessment Section 1 — Intake form

Assessment Section 2 — Detail form

Assessment Section 3 — Accompanying Children form

Assessment Section 4 — Supplementary Questions for People with a Mental Illness

Turnaways book

Case Notes forms

Children's Planner

Support Plan form

Action Planners

Client Consent to Release Information to Another Service

Client Consent to Receive Information from Other Services

Referral to Another Service form

Client Exit form

National Data Collection form

Client Feedback form

Information Kit for Cients

- The forms are filled in with the client, and the key information is entered into the computer at a later date.

Case management defined

Case management is an approach to service delivery, a way of delivering services.

Case management within SAAP services is a collaborative, client-focussed approach. It is aimed at empowering and working with clients to effectively meet individual needs.

It is a two-pronged approach incorporating direct client service, based on sound assessment and support planning, and collaboration of access to and delivery of, a range of other appropriate support services.

The SAAP worker operates within an agreed framework of principles, standards and ethics which enhance client choice and responsibility.

Case management may involve one worker as a key worker for a particular client or a team approach. The focus is on a strengthened service and support role for each individual service user, to ensure that a high quality service is received.

Case management in SAAP is appropriate in many, but not all, situations. It is flexible in application and timing in recognition of the many needs of individuals, and the limited control any agency or worker has over client outcomes. However, case management in SAAP occurs in the context of a transitional, time-limited framework for intervention.

From *Case Management Resource Kit for SAAP Services* produced by the National Case Management Working Group June 1997, page 1.1

5.1.2 Screening

Can be undertaken at the same time as Intake assessment

Primary responsibility

Workers trained in intake assessment procedures

Forms and Refuge record keeping books referred to

- Request for Information from People with a Mental Illness
- Assessment Section 1 — Intake form
- Any previous files the client has
- Turnaways book
- Referral to Another Service form

Policy

Screening identifies who can use (*Insert name*) Refuge's services and how to make decisions about prioritising clients if there are competing requests for service.

- Screening determines whether a woman fits the eligibility criteria of the Refuge. (Refer to eligibility criteria outlined in the *Organisational overview* section of this manual.)
- The screening process is applied to all women approaching the service at initial contact to make sure they are eligible for the service.
- If the woman meets the criteria and there is a vacancy, the refuge will proceed with the intake assessment.
- If the refuge is full, or the woman does not fit the criteria, (*Insert name)* Refuge will let the woman know this as soon as possible and offer her a referral to another service or outreach support (if appropriate).

- If the woman does not meet the criteria, (*Insert name*) Refuge will let her know why and offer her the refuge complaint process if she wants to make a complaint about her exclusion.
- The refuge will keep details of all requests for service made to the refuge and a record of the outcome. For example, woman eligible, vacancy available, intake assessment proceeded or woman eligible, no vacancy available, woman referred to X service or woman not eligible because XXX, referral provided to X service etc.

Procedure

The screening process is as follows:

- Assess whether an interpreter service is required and if so, arrange one.
- If the refuge is full, provide the client with the number of a refuge that will be able to assist or the number of the Domestic Violence Line and note the details in the Turnaways book.
- If the refuge is not full, provide the client with information about the eligibility criteria for (*Insert name*) Refuge.
- Determine whether the client fits the eligibility criteria and can be accommodated in the service. If there is any uncertainty about whether a woman meets the criteria, discuss the issues within the service and let the woman know as soon as possible, for example within one hour.
- If the client appears to have an unmanaged or unstable mental illness, then in consultation with the client, contact the mental health team. With the client's permission, workers could also contact the woman's GP.
- Let the client know as quickly as possible whether her request for a service can be met and if not, the reason/s why.
- If the request for service can be met, proceed with the intake procedure.

If request for service is not able to be met:

- Provide the client with information regarding alternative refuges that would be able to assist and, where possible, link the client in with the relevant service. Complete the Referral to Another Service form (see resources section).
- Record this information in the Turnaways book.
- If the client is not happy that their request for service is unable to be met, provide them with verbal and written information about the complaints procedures.

5.1.3 Intake assessment

Primary responsibility

Workers trained in intake assessment procedures

Forms and Refuge record keeping books referred to

- Assessment Section 1 — Intake form
- Information Kit for clients

Policy

Intake is the first part of the assessment process and includes welcoming the client and giving them information about the refuge.

- (*Insert name*) Refuge will carry out a crisis intake assessment as soon as possible after the woman (and children) enter the refuge. This will be used to assess immediate needs such as the need for safety and security, warmth, food, medical attention and personal care.
- Information requested at the intake assessment will be kept to a minimum to avoid any further distress to the woman *(A&E Resolution 15).*
- All women will be asked the same set of questions at intake assessment *(A&E Resolution 15)*.
- Clients will be given information about the service/s available, the refuge rules, client rights and responsibilities (including information, confidentiality and complaints procedures) and details of all fees. Clients can also view the policy and procedure manual if requested *(A&E Resolution 21).*
- Information for clients will be made available in written and taped form. The information has been translated into (*refuge to insert languages*). Where

necessary, interpreters will be used to explain information. *(A&E Resolution 20, 22 and 55).*

Procedure

- Assess whether an interpreter service is required and if so, arrange one.
- Welcome the client and attend to urgent needs for assistance immediately.
- If the client is new, open up a client file.
- Write the client's name on the sticker in the right hand corner of the file.
- Ask the client whether she is in a heterosexual or lesbian relationship (*A&E Resolution 62*).
- Enter client details on the database and complete Assessment Section 1 — Intake form (see resources section for a copy of the form*)*.
- Provide the woman with information about the service/s available, explain the refuge rules, client rights and responsibilities (including information, confidentiality and complaints procedures) and details of all fees. If the information is not available in the woman's language, or the woman has a visual impairment or intellectual disability, read the information to her slowly and clearly. Use an interpreter if necessary. Let the woman know the information is available on tape if she wants to listen to it again at a later date.
- Explain the refuge's complaint procedure.
- Give the woman an opportunity to ask questions.
- Introduce the woman and her children to the refuge staff who are on roster.
- Explain case management to the woman and let her know who will be working with her (and her children). (*For example, refuges to insert an explanation of whether one worker will be the case manager for the woman and her children or whether it will be shared by a team of workers or some other way.)*
- Let the woman know that this worker will have a more detailed conversation with her when she and her family are settled into the refuge.
- Show the woman and her children around the service. Explain how the refuge operates and introduce her to other residents.

- Tell the woman how to make emergency contact with workers after-hours.
- Explain emergency procedures.
- If the entry into the service is after hours, or if the woman (or her children) is distressed, it may not be appropriate to provide all the above information at the time of entry. Use your discretion and make sure that the client is provided with all the relevant information within the first two days of entry into the service, by liaising with the worker who is allocated the case management role.

5.1.4 Assessment

Primary responsibility

Workers trained in intake assessment procedures

Forms and Refuge record keeping books referred to

- Assessment Section 1 — Intake form
- Assessment Section 2 — Detail form
- Assessment Section 3 — Accompanying Children form
- Assessment Section 4 — Supplementary Questions for People with a Mental Illness
- Any previous files the client has
- Case Notes forms
- Children's Planner (if there are older children involved in the assessment)

Policy

A more detailed assessment is required for case management planning. This is ongoing and starts as soon as the woman feels stable enough to begin planning.

This assessment will consider the client's social history and her history of involvement with the service. It will be a holistic assessment that takes account of a wide range of factors the affect the client's situation.

(*Insert name*) Refuge has the following policy on assessment:

- All workers that carry out assessments will have received training in assessment.
- Children are recognised as clients in their own right, so each family member will be assessed. Younger children will be included with the mother's assessment. Older children may be assessed separately, in consultation with the mother. (*A&E Resolution 41*)

- Previous client records will be used in the assessment if relevant.
- Assessments will take account of clients' needs and strengths, including cultural, linguistic and physical needs.
- Assessments are to commence as soon as possible after a woman enters the refuge, and must be completed within three days maximum.
- All women will be asked the same set of questions at assessment *(A&E Resolution 15)*.
- Assessments are to be written down on the Assessment forms listed above in easy to read language.
- Workers undertaking assessments are supervised by the manager/collective.
- Workers are not to ask clients to divulge the HIV or hepatitis status of herself or her children. If this information is offered, then it must be kept confidential. It must not be released to any other source without the client's consent. (*A&E Resolution 86*)

Procedure

The manager/collective will allocate a suitably experienced staff member to undertake the assessment. The assessment should be kept as informal as possible and take place in a private place where the woman feels comfortable. The assessment procedure carried out by the allocated worker is as follows:

- Make an appointment to meet with the woman and her children to begin needs assessment. This should be when the woman feels settled enough to begin making future plans, and must be within the first three days of entering the service.
- Assess whether an interpreter service is required and if so, arrange one.
- Take the client file from the filing cabinet and make sure that all the necessary forms are inside.
- Explain the service's case management approach to the client and get her agreement to participate.

- Read any previous client records, and discuss previous assessments and goals with the client. If the client wants to, goals might need to be adjusted. Build on previous plans and discuss what different steps can be taken to make progress towards achieving goals. Emphasise past achievements.
- Complete any of the Assessment Section 1 — Intake form that was not completed during the intake procedure.
- Details of the needs of the woman should be noted in the case notes. Use the assessment checklist on Assessment Section 2 — Detail form, as a prompt for issues to be covered.
- If the client has a mental illness, complete Assessment Section 4 — Supplementary Questions for People with a Mental Illness form (see resources for a copy).
- Make sure that the assessment recorded on the case notes reflects the woman's assessment of her needs. Where the worker's assessment differs, the woman's assessment is recorded.

Assessing the needs of children

- Meet with the client to assess the needs of her children. Direct observation of the children may indicate some needs that can be discussed with the parent. Use the Assessment Section 3 — Accompanying Children form as a prompt. Assessment of the needs of accompanying children should be noted on separate pages of the case notes. Once again the worker and client should discuss their assessments, but the written assessment should reflect the views of the parent/guardian. Start a new page of case notes for each accompanying child.
- The woman may have children who are not in the refuge with her. They need to be considered in the assessment process.
- Older children should participate in the identification of their needs. They are encouraged to write their own notes in the Children's Planner.

- As needs are reviewed in future sessions, make further notes on the case notes.

5.1.5 Planning

Primary responsibility

Workers trained in intake assessment procedures

Forms and Refuge record keeping books referred to

- Support Plan form
- Action Planners
- Previous Support Plan if the client has a history with the service
- Referral to Another Service form

Policy

Planning follows on from assessment of needs. It involves setting goals and priorities, and identifying the steps necessary to achieve these. Goals may be small and specific, as well as broad and long term. The planning should be client driven and empowering.

(*Insert name*) Refuge has the following policy regarding planning:

- Wherever possible the worker carrying out the assessment will also take responsibility for assisting the client to develop and implement a support plan.
- If case management is shared, (*Insert name*) Refuge will let the woman know who will have access to her file and why.
- If the client is assessed as having a mental health problem, where possible, the support plan will be developed in consultation with the relevant health care professional who is supporting the client.
- If the client wishes to involve someone from their cultural group, or an ethno-specific service, in the support planning, this will be accommodated.

- If the client wishes to attend cultural events or workshops during her stay, this will be accommodated and planned for (*A&E Resolution 55*).
- If necessary, a case conference can be arranged to decide on issues of case management responsibility and to coordinate the response.
- If appropriate, the case manager may refer clients to other services as required. If referrals are suggested, the worker is to get the clients approval before taking any further action unless the safety of the client, or her children, is at risk *(A&E Resolution 17)* (Use the Referral to Another Service form in resources).
- The support plan will be recorded on the Support Plan form.
- The support plan will reflect the needs and wishes of the client, as far as possible. Where this is incompatible with the resources of the refuge, this will be negotiated.
- The support plan should be owned by the client and she should have a copy written in her own words. Action Planners* will be provided for women and children to record their own notes and plans.
- Workers undertaking support plans are supervised by the manager/collective.

* Action Planners can be made up by the refuge. We recommend a little A5 booklet (just staple three or four A4 pages down the middle). The Action Planner contains a copy of the clients support plan, a space to write down all the key actions the client has agreed to and who is responsible for each action and a space to record contact details for important services that clients may need to approach. It is also a good idea to leave some blank pages for the client to write down any notes.

Policy regarding accompanying children

(*Insert name*) Refuge has the following policy regarding children:

- All workers will be trained in working with children. The child support role involves providing support to the family by assessing children's needs, working with children to develop skills, and providing emotional support and quality time for children.
- Children will be linked into mainstream services where appropriate.
- The mother's permission will be sought before children are referred to another agency.
- Referral to another agency without the mother's permission will only be made where the child is considered to be at risk. This proposed action should always be discussed within the service beforehand.
- Plans for the children will focus on strengthening the family and supporting the mother to care for her children.

Procedure

Develop a support plan using the Support Plan form. To do this:

- Assess whether an interpreter service is required and if so, arrange one.
- Discuss the needs that were identified during the assessment, and assist the client to develop priorities and set goals. Goals can include a mixture of short-term specific goals and long-term broader goals.
- If the client has used (*Insert name*) Refuge before, go back to the support plan that was previously developed and build on that, taking into account any achievements or barriers that have occurred.
- Explain to the client approximately how long she can expect to stay at the refuge, and the process for exit planning.
- Assist the client to identify and discuss options, taking into account the resources of the refuge.
- Identify who is going to be responsible for the actions. Encourage the woman to take as much responsibility as she can cope with. Give her an Action Planner so she can make her own notes and write down the actions she is responsible for.

- Identify the goals for which referral to another agency is required.
- Get the client's consent to make a referral to another agency, and also to pass on any relevant information to the referral agency. Ask the client to sign a Referral to Another Service form. Remember, the client does not have to sign this form. If she does not, no information can be passed on to other services.
- Help the mother to develop goals for each child. These will include services that can be arranged for the child, and services that can be arranged for the mother to assist her with parenting, for example, parent support group. Older children should participate in this and have the opportunity to set some goals of their own. Use the Children's Planner to help them do this.
- The goals the mother sets for her children may be long-term. Help her to develop short-term steps or actions that will lead toward meeting these goals.
- Include all the services being provided by all providers in the support plan.
- Write the support plan using language familiar to the woman, read it out to make sure that she agrees with it. Use an interpreter if needed.
- Make a copy of the support plan. Give one copy to the client and place the original in the client's file. Alternately, women can be encouraged to write out their own copy of the support plan in their own words. Use an interpreter if necessary.
- Make sure the client is clear about who is taking responsibility for which aspects of the plan.
- Make a time to meet again and review the plan.

5.1.6 Direct service

Primary responsibility

All general and child support staff

Forms and Refuge record keeping books referred to

- Refuge day book
- Completed client Support Plans

Policy

Direct service involves work with, and for, service users. This includes children accompanying adults.

(*Insert name*) Refuge has the following policy regarding direct services:

- Staff meetings are held *(insert time, eg once a fortnight)* to discuss client issues and staff issues. These meetings are facilitated and minutes taken. Minutes of these meetings are kept in locked filing cabinet along with client files.
- Refuge meetings are held *(insert time, eg once a week)* for residents to discuss their concerns and to organise the housekeeping roster. An interpreter will be arranged when required. These meetings are facilitated and minutes taken. Key information arising from the meeting is distributed to clients for their reference.
- Workers on roster should record any relevant client information in the day book.
- If workers are unsure about how to respond to a situation, they should discuss it within the service at the earliest opportunity.
- The refuge will not hold or dispense any medication for clients or their children. All medication is solely the client's responsibility.

Procedure

In (*Insert name*) Refuge, the worker allocated to works with clients will:

- Provide the service/s that they have undertaken to provide and carry out the tasks they have agreed to do, within the agreed time frame.
- Provide encouragement and where appropriate, assistance to the client to carry out the tasks that she has responsibility for.
- Note the outcomes of their actions on the client's support plan for discussion at the next planning meeting with the client.
- Discuss tasks relating to accompanying children with the parent, and decide who will take responsibility for any follow-up.
- Work closely with the case manager from another service, if the case management is being provided by that service, to carry out their part of the support plan.

5.1.7 Coordination

Primary responsibility

All general and child support staff

Forms and Refuge record keeping books referred to

- Client Consent to Release Information to Another Service
- Client Consent to Receive Information from Other Services
- Referral to Another Service form
- The client's Support Plan

Policy

Coordination in relation to case management involves having an understanding of the role of other services and developing co-operative working relationships with relevant services. It also means knowing when you have a shared client, and who is doing what (with the client's consent).

(*Insert name*) Refuge has the following policy regarding case management coordination:

- Where appropriate, (*Insert name*) Refuge will work with external services to case manage client issues.
- All contact with external services will be with the client's consent (given in writing by completing a Referral to Another Service form).
- Where case management is to be shared with one or more other services, client information will be shared with the services as required provided the client agrees. Client consent to share information, including detail of what information will be shared and why, will be obtained in writing by clients signing the Client Consent to Release Information to Another Service and Client Consent to Receive Information from Other Services forms.

- Where case conferences are required between services, the manager/member of the collective will chair any conferences organised by the refuge.
- The client may, if they wish, ask a friend or family member or worker from an ethno-specific service to assist them in support planning.
- The refuge will establish strong networks with Aboriginal, ethno-specific, disability, lesbian, youth and mental health services as well as cultural groups in the region, and identify key people to provide advice when required.

Procedure

When coordinating client issues with other services, workers are to:

- Make sure that the client has agreed to the referral for herself or her children and has signed the Referral to Another Service form.
- Check that the client understands why the referral is being made and the service they should receive.
- Make a referral to the services listed on the support plan using the Referral to Another Service form. Write a letter of support when a written referral is appropriate.
- Accompany the client to another service if necessary, or ask the client if they would like a friend or family member to accompany them.
- Where a number of services are to be involved, negotiate with other services how the services will be coordinated and who will take the lead role in coordination. If necessary, hold a case conference to decide this and make sure the client is involved in the negotiations.
- Advocate on behalf of the client if requested and appropriate.
- Record the outcomes of referrals, case coordination or case conferences with the client on the Support Plan. Include detail of which service is the case manager and what is being provided by each service.

5.1.8 Monitoring and review

Primary responsibility

All general and child support staff

Forms and Refuge record keeping books referred to

- Client's Support Plan

Policy

Monitoring is the process of reassessing needs and revising the plan, to keep it up to date with the current needs of the woman and accompanying children. The plan is also regularly reviewed to check on achievements and explore ways of getting over any barriers that have come up.

(*Insert refuge*) will:

- Review support plans regularly as required. At a minimum, this will be every (*insert time, for example every three weeks*). Wherever possible, plans will be reviewed by the same worker who developed them with the client.
- Conduct reviews in a private place where the woman feels comfortable.
- Involve the parents in any review of the children's needs and support plans.

Procedure

The worker/s allocated to be a client's case manager will:

- Meet with the client regularly to reassess the client's needs and the needs of accompanying children.
- Review the support plan regularly to identify achievements, set new priorities, identify barriers and ways to overcome them, and make new goals to meet any additional needs. Write up changes on the client's support plan and if necessary, write up a new support plan.

- Take into account assessments or feedback from other services.
- Keep a copy of the revised support plan in the client's file, and give a copy to the client.
- Write up case notes as necessary.
- Check that the client is happy with the process, and make a further time to meet and further review their situation.

5.1.9 Exit planning and case follow-up

Primary responsibility

All general and child support staff

Forms and Refuge record keeping books referred to

- Client's Support Plan
- Client Exit form
- Assessment forms (Sections 1, 2, 3 and 4)
- National Data Collection form

Policy

Exit planning involves planning for when a person might exit the refuge for stable long-term accommodation. The ongoing support needs of the client are assessed and a follow-up plan is negotiated, where appropriate.

Exit planning

- (*Insert name*) Refuge accommodates women and children in crisis accommodation for a period of up to (*insert time, for example four weeks or three months*). This is explained to clients during the assessment and planning stage.
- The case worker and the client will work together towards a smooth and safe transition to independent accommodation as part of the monitoring and review of the support plan. This applies whether a client decides to return home (and at times to the perpetrator of violence) or to new independent accommodation.
- Exit planning may need to be done in consultation with other services. The client's case worker will facilitate this with the client's permission.

- The refuge, with the client's permission, will notify the relevant people of the change in the client's circumstances.
- Where the client has been allocated new independent housing such as private rental or priority public housing, the case worker will help the client to arrange her housing needs. These may include (but are not limited to) assisting with power and phone connections, buying furniture etc.
- Where the worker is aware that a woman and her children are returning to a potentially unsafe or unstable situation, workers will help the client where possible to develop a safety plan.

Exit without planning

- If a woman leaves the refuge at short notice and without any planning, write up the case notes and the National Data Collection form and close the file, keeping it easy to access in case the client returns. A further contact from the client automatically re-opens the file.

Follow-up

- All women leaving the refuge will be offered (*insert follow-up*) for a period of (*insert time*) if they require it. This can be provided by (*insert ways, for example telephone, home visit (provided the woman is not living back with the perpetrator) or meeting at the refuge or other pre-arranged venue*).
- Ex-residents are free to come to the refuge during business hours if they require assistance or support with an issue. However, they should be encouraged to access community supports rather than build dependency on the refuge.
- (*Insert if relevant*.) Ex-residents are encouraged to attend the ex-resident support groups held at the refuge every (*insert time, for example week or month etc*).
- It is up to the woman to make contact with the refuge if they want follow-up or outreach support.

- (*Insert if relevant*.) To protect workers, no visits will be made to homes if the woman has moved back in with the perpetrator.

Procedure

When developing a support plan with the client, the worker will ask the client at what point she will be ready to leave (*Insert name*) Refuge. (This will normally be when she finds affordable, independent accommodation.)

When it is approaching time for the client to leave the service, the worker will:

- Meet with the client and review what she has achieved and what goals she is still working on.
- If the client has a mental health problem, negotiate with the client and case manager about when the client should exit the SAAP service.
- Help the client to identify support services in the community and within her own support network, which will help her remain independent from the refuge. Encourage her to contact services herself to build up her self-esteem and confidence.
- Where appropriate, advocate on behalf of the client.
- Help the client to identify the ongoing needs of accompanying children and to identify services in the community which can help.
- Explain to the client that the relationship with the agency and workers will be on a different footing when she leaves the service. Let the client know what kinds of outreach support the service can/cannot provide. Also let her know that she can ask to re-enter the service at any time.
- Arrange practical assistance to help the woman and children exit the service. (This will be provided by whichever staff member is on roster at the time.)
- Negotiate a follow-up plan if needed. Write this down on the Client Exit form.

- If the client is being case managed by another service, liaise with the case manager to ensure that they know when the client will be leaving, and that they have arranged any necessary follow-up.
- Complete the paper work.
- Write up any case notes and complete the Client Exit form.
- Using the information on the Assessment forms, complete the National Data Collection form ready for sending to the National Data Collection Agency.
- If follow up is not being provided, close the client file and store in the closed files drawer of the filing cabinet.
- Provide follow up as required.

5.1.10 Evaluation

Primary responsibility

All general and child support staff

Forms and Refuge record keeping books referred to

- Client Feedback form
- Client Exit form
- Turnaways book
- National Data Collection forms

Policy

Evaluation includes feedback from the client on the services provided, and evaluation by the workers of the process of delivering services to a client or group of clients.

- All clients will be given the opportunity to provide feedback by completing a Client Feedback form.
- Negative feedback will not affect future services to the client.
- The worker's assessment of the services provided and outcomes for the client are noted at the bottom of the Client Exit form, and discussed during regular supervision sessions.
- (*Inert name*) Refuge will evaluate each of the key elements of case management by periodically surveying clients and staff.

Procedure

The process is as follows:

- Before the client leaves the service, give her a client feedback form and a stamped envelope addressed to the Chairperson of the management committee.

- Encourage the client to provide written feedback either before, or after she leaves the service.
- Workers can discuss their own assessment of the services provided during supervision sessions.
- Evaluate the case management process on an on-going basis.

At the end of each week, the manager/collective

- Reviews the closed files for the week to ensure that no further follow-up is required and follows up any queries with the relevant worker in supervision.
- Records the cases on the statistical data sheets as required.
- Files closed files in the Closed Files drawer of the filing cabinet.

At the end of each month, the manager/collective

- Totals the number of turnaways for the month from the Turnaways book.
- Collates the client feedback from the Client Feedback forms.
- Sends off the National Data Collection forms to the National Data Collection Agency.

At the end of each year, the staff

- Check through the one-off requests and closed client files for clients who have not contacted the service for five years.
- Make a note of these client records and archive them in a labelled box for a further two years.

Case management resource list

5.1.11 Request for Information from People with a Mental Illness

5.1.12 Assessment Section 1 — Intake form

5.1.13 Assessment Section 2 — Detail form

5.1.14 Assessment Section 3 — Accompanying Children form

5.1.15 Assessment Section 4 — Supplementary Questions for People with a Mental Illness

5.1.16 Case Notes forms

5.1.17 Children's Planner

5.1.18 Support Plan form

5.1.19 Client Consent to Release Information to Another Service

5.1.20 Client Consent to Receive Information from Other Services

5.1.21 Referral to Another Service form

5.1.22 Client Exit form

5.1.23 Client Feedback form

5.1.24 Information Kit for Clients

5.4 Working with children

5.2.1 Children as clients

Primary responsibility

All staff working with children

Policy

- (*Insert name*) Refuge recognises children and young people as clients in their own right.
- (*Insert name*) Refuge will employ sufficient skilled, child-focused staff to meet the specific needs of children (*A&E Resolution 43*).
- (*Insert name*) Refuge will provide adequate, developmentally appropriate resources and equipment for children, for example: indoor and outdoor play areas; developmentally and age appropriate play equipment; games, puzzles, books and toys from a range of cultures and in community languages; etc (*A&E Resolution 45*).
- (*Insert name*) Refuge will provide a service that is conducive to the emotional and physical well being and development of children.
- All staff are to receive training in child support and child related issues such as child protection, ENACT, child witnesses of domestic violence etc.
- (*Insert name*) Refuge will provide a child support program that addresses the affects that domestic violence has on children and young people (*A&E Resolution 44*). This program will include:
  - child support sessions for preschool and school aged children
  - play groups for mothers with babies and toddlers
  - school vacation programs in the school holidays, which may include child support sessions, outings and activities.

- The Child Support worker will advocate on behalf of children both within and outside the refuge. This includes liaising with relevant agencies and making appropriate referrals.
- The Child Support worker will work closely with mothers in an empowering and supportive way, bringing to their attention needs and issues that become apparent during their time at the refuge.
- A follow-up program will be provided to support and assist children when they leave the refuge and move to a new home unless the mother and child/ren return to the perpetrator.

5.2.2 Child support and case management

Primary responsibility

All staff working with children

Forms and Refuge record keeping books referred to

- Children's case management planner (if there are older children involved in the assessment)

Policy

- (*Insert name*) Refuge will provide child support sessions for preschool and school-aged children.
- Children must be toilet trained to attend child support sessions.
- The Protective Behaviours Program will be incorporated into the child support program.

Procedure

- Assess children after an initial settling in period and complete an individual case plan (in consultation with the mother/guardian) for children attending child support.
- Include a case plan for younger children in their mothers' case plan.
- Structure activities to address the case plan, either in a group setting or on a one-to-one basis depending on the individual child's needs.
- Discuss each child's well being, progress and case plan at the weekly worker meetings.

5.2.3 Children attending school

Primary responsibility

All staff working with children

Policy

- All school age children must attend school during their stay at the refuge. Where children's safety is at risk, then alternative arrangements can be made with the help of the Department of Education.

Procedure

- Liaise with local schools on an on-going basis to ensure good communication and that the safety and confidentiality of the children remains paramount.
- Where possible, inform the school of any legal documents such as Apprehended Violence Orders or contact orders.
- Encourage mothers to accompany infant and primary school age children to and from school to ensure their safety.

5.2.4 Children not attending school or child support

- Children who are home from school because they are sick will not attend child support sessions until they return to school.
- If a child is not attending school because they have to go to a medical or legal appointment, then this will be discussed with the mother and an exception may be made.

5.2.5 Excursions

Primary responsibility

All staff working with children

Forms and Refuge record keeping books referred to

- Child Support Excursion form

Policy

- If the child is accompanied by the mother or guardian during a child support excursion, the mother or guardian has total responsibility for the child/ren.
- When children are taken on an excursion without the mother or guardian, the Child Support Excursion form must be completed by the mother or guardian before the child leaves the refuge. This form includes consent to emergency medical procedures.

Worker to child ratio for excursions

- No more than two preschool age children may accompany one worker on an excursion. For example, one worker, two children or two workers, four children etc.
- The behaviour of the children may be taken into account to determine if less is more manageable.
- The number of older children that can accompany each worker will need to be assessed based on the child's maturity, responsibility, past behaviour, group dynamics etc.

Swimming excursions

- Children are not to be taken on swimming excursions to water areas such as the pool, beach, lake, dam etc without being accompanied by their mother or guardian who has full responsibility for the child/ren.

Procedure

- If taking a child on an excursion without the mother or guardian, make sure the Child Support Excursion form is completed by the mother or guardian before the child leaves the refuge.

If a child runs away whilst on excursion

- The child's safety is paramount. Contact the mother first and then make a decision about what action to take.
- Depending on the age, maturity and history of the child, workers may contact the police or DoCS or family friends where the child may have gone.

5.2.6 Children who run away or are abandoned

Primary responsibility

All staff working with children

Policy

- If a child runs away, refuge workers will make decisions about what to do in consultation with the mother or guardian where possible and based on the child's age, maturity and history. The child's safety is paramount.
- If a child is abandoned, refuge workers will try to locate the mother or guardian first and then notify DoCS.

Procedure

Children who run away while they are at the refuge

- Consult the mother first and then make a decision about what action to take.
- Depending on the age, maturity and history of the child, contact the police or DoCS or family friends where the child may have gone or give the child time to calm down.
- If the incident occurs after hours, call the on-call worker (and/or other workers) in to help.

Children who are abandoned

- If a resident leaves a child unattended at the school or refuge, try and locate the mother or guardian first.
- If the mother or guardian cannot be located, call the DoCS Helpline and notify them.
- If the mother or guardian returns to the refuge, but you are still concerned for the child's safety and well being, then call the DoCS Helpline anyway.

5.2.7 Other

Primary responsibility

All staff working with children

Maintenance of child support equipment

- Child Support workers are to check equipment, toys, games etc regularly to make sure they are working and safe. Carry out simple repairs or refer them to the refuge maintenance person.
- Discard irreparable or unsafe equipment immediately, even if a replacement will take some time.

Motor vehicle child restraints

- Children travelling in vehicles must wear a seat belt or must be secured in a car seat or capsule (baby).
- If a child refuses to wear a seat belt, then they cannot travel in the vehicle and will remain at the refuge with their mother.

Resources for working with children

5.2.8 Child Support Excursion form

5.3 Child protection

5.3.1 Child protection

Primary responsibility

All staff working with children

Forms and refuge record keeping books referred to

- Prohibited Employment Declaration Form*
- Working with Children Check application*
- Children or Unborn Child at Risk Report form (*see resources*)

* These forms are available from the Commission for Children and Young People. Their phone number as at 12/5/03 is (02) 9286 7220 and web address is: www.kids.nsw.gov.au/check

Policy

- All workers at (*Insert name*) Refuge must follow ENACT legislation.
- All workers must be familiar with the ENACT legislation and if required, training on the ENACT legislation will be arranged as soon as possible after a worked commences employment.
- All workers must follow the Interagency Child Protection Guidelines.
- All workers will assist children and young people to make a request for assistance, or make the request on behalf of children and young people, if required.
- All workers at (*Insert name*) Refuge are mandatory reporters and residents are to be informed of this at intake.
- Copies of any child's disclosure of abuse will be kept secure indefinately and made available to that child if they want to undertake court proceedings in the future.
- Copies of all reports to DoCS will be kept on file at the Refuge.

- (*Insert name*) Refuge will abide by the *Prohibited Employment Act 1998* and the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998* when employing new workers and checking current workers.
- All current workers are to be asked to declare if they are a prohibited person (that is, someone who has been convicted of a serious sex offence). Current workers will also be asked to complete and sign a Prohibited Employment Declaration form.
- All potential employees must complete a Working with Children Check application which will be submitted to the NSW Department of Community Services Screening Agency for clearance.

Procedures

Requests for assistance

Under the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*, Sections 20, 21 and 22, a parent, child or young person may request assistance from DoCS. On receiving such a request, DoCS may provide or arrange for other government departments or agencies, or community organisations, to provide services to help children and/or young people and their families. (Refer to the Act for a list of services.)

- To make a request for assistance on behalf of children or young people, contact the DoCS Helpline and state that you are making a request for assistance.
- Give the DoCS Helpline as much information as possible about the child/ren or young people you are requesting assistance for and the assistance you are requesting.
- Actively seek feedback on the outcome of your request for services.

Mandatory reports

Under the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*, Section 26, women and children's refuges are mandatory reporters. If a worker has a concern that a child/ren or young person is at risk of harm, it must be reported to the DoCS Helpline.

A child or young person, or an unborn child, may be at risk of harm if they have witnessed or experienced:

- physical or emotional abuse
- neglect
- sexual abuse
- domestic violence

A child or young person may also be considered at risk of harm if they have contact with the perpetrator or they make a disclosure.

Any young person under the age of 16 years old who is not accompanied by an adult must be reported to DoCS.

- Inform all residents that all workers at (*Insert name*) Refuge are mandatory reporters.
- If the child is in immediate danger, then report to DoCS Helpline immediately. This can be done phone or fax.
  Phone: 133627
  Fax: (02) 9633 7666
- If the child is not in immediate danger, discuss the matter within the service.

Disclosures of abuse

- If a child makes a disclosure of abuse to a worker at (*Insert name*) Refuge, this worker must make a report to DoCS.
- Record the child's account of the abuse accurately and objectively. Where possible, record the child's exact words.

Records of reports and disclosures

- Use the DoCS Helpline Report Guidelines to help you provide the necessary information in your report.
- Keep a record of all reports in the DoCS reporting file. A copy of the report should also be filed in the client's file.
- Keep a record of DoCS feedback in the DoCS reporting file. A copy of the feedback should also be filed in the client's file.
- Keep a copy of any children's disclosure in the DoCS reporting file. A copy of the feedback should also be filed in the child or young person's file.
- All written information about a child's disclosure of abuse must be kept secure indefinately so that if the child wishes to undertake court proceedings at any time on the future, that information will remain available to them.

Checking current workers

- Ask all current employees who work directly with children unsupervised (who have not already been asked) to declare if they are a prohibited person (that is, someone who has been convicted of a serious sex offence).
- Ask all workers to complete and sign a Prohibited Employment Declaration form. (Note: this is a legal requirement, not an option.)

Employing new workers

- All advertisements for staff are to include the following statement:
  It is an offence under the Prohibited Employment Act 1998 for a person convicted of a serious sex offence to apply for this position.
- The advertisement must also state that any successful applicant will be required to undergo the Working with Children Check as a condition of employment.
- Ask the successful applicant to complete a Working with Children Check application and submit it to the NSW Department of Community Services Screening Agency for clearance. (Note: this is a legal requirement, not an option.)

Resources for child protection section

5.3.2 Children or Unborn Child at Risk Report Form

5.4 Day-to-day client matters

5.4.1 Clients rights and responsibilities

Policy

- (*Insert name)* Refuge recognises that clients have rights and responsibilities as outlined in the sample attached.
- Clients are to be informed of their rights and responsibilities verbally as part of intake to the service. Written copies are also to be given to clients as part of the information about the refuge pack.

Procedure

- Inform clients of their rights and responsibilities at intake and give them a written copy in the information about the refuge pack.
- Case workers, remind clients of their rights and responsibilities at each meeting they have with the client.
- Answer any questions that clients have about rights and responsibilities and explain any point more fully if requested.

Sample client rights and responsibilities

Client rights

Women and children accessing (*Insert name*) Refuge have the right to:

- confidentiality
- access all the information about themselves the refuge holds
- make their own decisions
- be involved in all discussions concerning their assessment and support
- be made aware of all their options and any fees that are to be charged
- receive information about the service, including what service clients can expect, complaints procedures and house rules
- refuse a service without prejudicing their future access to the service
- be treated in a fair and non-discriminatory manner
- be treated with respect and dignity
- feel safe
- be free from all forms of abuse
- maintain control of any personal property
- provide feedback on the service they receive.

Client responsibilities

Women accessing (*Insert name*) Refuge services are expected to:

- respect the rights of others, including their right to confidentiality and privacy, by not telling anyone outside the refuge the names or details of workers or other clients
- not disclose the location of the refuge
- take responsibility for their own decisions
- respect the property of others
- follow the house rules of the agency (*see sample house rules attached*)
- pay any fees or charges as agreed

- follow the procedures of the agency to ensure the refuge is a safe place
- help to keep the environment clean
- refrain from any type of violence towards others (workers or clients) including physical, emotional, sexual abuse
- refrain from racial, sexual, homophobic or any other forms of harassment or abuse
- inform staff of support needs
- inform staff if they are not happy with the services they are receiving or the way in which they are provided
- take responsibility for children in their care.

Children accessing (*Insert name*) Refuge services are expected to:

- leave play areas tidy after using them
- refrain from any type of violence towards others
- refrain from racial, sexual, homophobic and other forms of harassment
- respect privacy of other residents, ie not enter another families' room without permission.

5.4.2 House rules

Policy

- (*Insert name*) Refuge has developed a set of house rules to ensure the refuge runs smoothly and is a safe place for clients and staff. (See sample house rules attached.) *(A&E Resolution 23 and 24)*
- If necessary to ensure access and equity, house rules may be administered flexibly, for example if a woman is employed and not able to do household chores. *(A&E Resolution 25)*
- Clients are to be informed of the house rules verbally as part of intake to the service. Written copies are also to be given to clients as part of the information about the refuge pack.

Procedure

- Inform clients of the house rules verbally at intake and give them a written copy with the information about the refuge pack.
- Case workers, remind clients of house rules as required.
- Answer any questions that clients may have about house rules and explain any point more fully if requested.

Sample house rules

Following is an example of a client-focused agreement/statement to be signed by both agency representative and the client.

We would like to welcome you to (*Insert name*) Refuge.

We try to remain a healthy environment that is free of violence, where your property is safe and you and your children will be treated with respect.

(*Insert name*) Refuge is a smoke free zone, except in the back garden where ashtrays are provided for butts and matches.

(*Insert name*) Refuge is an alcohol and drug-free house.

Household jobs are a shared activity, (*Insert name*) Refuge does not employ a cleaner, although a handy-person comes in once a week to mow grass and do simple repairs.

We do not expect you or your children to tolerate intimidation threats or actual violence or theft of your property. Our policy is to act on behalf of/support any women or child who experiences any such act in whatever action they want to pursue including reporting the matter to police or DoCS.

We reassure you that people who are violent (including your partner) are not permitted on the property. The police will respond quickly to requests for removing offenders from the property.

You will of course keep your responsibility for caring for your children. You will not be expected to take care of other women's children while you stay at (*Insert name*) Refuge. School age children can continue at their current school or you will be given help in enrolling at the local school.

5.4.3 Client fees

Primary responsibility

Manager and bookkeeper/collective

Policy

Refuges to insert their fee structure here.

For example:

- (*Insert name)* Refuge will charge each client a fee that is no more than 20% of her income if the Refuge provides food or no more than 10% of her income if the Refuge does not provide food (*A&E Resolution 31*). There will be no additional charge for any children the woman has in her care.
- In accordance with the WRM Access and Equity policy, (*Insert name)* Refuge may waive this fee if a woman's income is less than the full Supporting Parents Pension, or, if the woman has no accompanying children, less than the Youth, Disability or Abstudy allowance(s) (*A&E Resolution 30*).
- The fee-paying status of residents will be kept confidential (*A&E Resolution 32*).
- (*Insert name)* Refuge will provide the minimum services of accommodation, support, food, utilities, linen and transport to all residents, regardless of their fee-paying status (*A&E Resolution 32*).
- In accordance with the WRM Access and Equity policy (page 32), (*Insert name)* Refuge will keep all other charges, such as linen deposits or charges for the washing machine and dryer, to a minimum. Additional charges will only be imposed on clients where it is necessary for the refuge to cover costs (*A&E Resolution 34*). Additional fees charged at present:
  Refuges to insert list of any additional fees.
- All fees and additional charges will be explained to clients as part of intake.

- Clients will be issued with a written receipt of all monies paid to the refuge (see procedure for details) (*A&E Resolution 33*).
- The fee structure will be reviewed annually and can only be changed with approval of the management committee/broader collective.

Procedure

- At intake, inform clients of the refuge's fees and let her know what services she will receive for this fee.
- Inform the client of all extra costs she may incur, for example any bonds or deposits, charges for washing machine or dryer etc.
- Inform the client of the range of ways that she can pay the fee and extra charges and decide on a payment method that suits her. (*Refuges need to insert the methods of payment they will accept here.*)
- If the client informs you that she has no income, consider waiving the fee. If necessary, discuss this within the service.
- Whenever a client pays rent to the refuge, issue the client with a written receipt that contains:
  - the name and address of the refuge
  - the date of payment; the name of the person making the payment
  - the amount of money paid
  - whether the payment was in cash or by cheque
  - the period of residency that payment covers
  - the signature of the staff member to whom the payment was made.

5.4.4 Telephone

Primary responsibility

Residents

Policy

Refuges to insert their policy about telephones here.

For example,

- A pay phone is provided for client use.
- Clients are asked to limit each call to half an hour and to be mindful that other residents may want to use the phone.
- If clients need to call workers outside of hours, the cost of the call will be refunded to the client.

5.4.5 House meetings

Primary responsibility

Staff and residents

Policy

Refuges to insert their policy about house meetings here.

For example:

- Resident house meetings will be held every (*insert day/s*) at (*insert time/s*).
- All residents are to attend these meetings unless they are sick or away from the refuge at the time of the meeting.
- (*insert number*) staff members will also attend these meetings.
- Residents are to be told about house meetings during intake.
- The purpose of these meetings is to enable residents to talk about any issues or concerns they might have, for example issues arising from living communally, children, up-coming events, rosters, dipsutes etc. The meetings also provide a forum for staff to pass on any information to residents.

Refuge to include its procedure for what happens to children while these meetings are on.

Procedure

- House meetings are held in (*insert location*).
- A staff member will remind all residents about the meeting 15 minutes before it is scheduled to start.
- At the beginning of the meeting, give everyone a chance to add items to the agenda.
- Take notes if any decisions are made or follow-up action is required.

- After the meeting, distribute copies of these notes to all residents (including residents who could not attend the meeting).

4.5.6 Visitors

Primary responsibility

Staff and residents

Policy

Refuge to insert its own policy about visitors.

For example:

Visitors are permitted at (*Insert name*) Refuge under the following conditions:

- Clients are asked to keep visitors to a minimum and to keep visits to around *(insert time, say one hour).*
- Only female visitors are permitted unless the visitor is a service provider supporting the client.
- Clients are asked to let staff know if they are expecting visitors, who they are and when they are coming.
- Visitors are only permitted (*insert locations, for example on the verandah and the lounge room*). Visitors are not permitted (*insert locations, for example in bedrooms*).

5.4.7 Transport

Policy

Refuge to insert its policy about transport, for example

- Residents are encouraged to catch public transport if they have meetings away from the refuge.
- Residents may be transported in the refuge vehicle if the situation requires it.
- The refuge vehicle may be used for group outings with staff.
- Taxis are only to be called if there is no alternative available.

Procedure

Refuge to insert procedures to match policy.

5.4.8 Client belongings

From Albury

Policy

Picking up belongings from a resident's home

- Staff can help clients pick up things from her home provided a police escort has been organised (even if the perpetrator is not expected at the house) and the staff member carries a mobile phone.
- If clients do not want to involve the police, staff are not to help.

If a client leaves belongings behind at the refuge

- If belongings are left at the refuge, the refuge will store them for (insert time, for example one month).
- During this time, the refuge will try to contact the client.
- If the belongings are not claimed within the time period specified above, the refuge will give them to charity.

Procedure

Picking up belongings from a resident's home

- If a client requests help to pick up things from her home, organise a Police escort (even if the perpetrator is not expected at the house).
- If clients do not want to involve the police, let them know staff are not able to help.
- If staff go with the woman and the Police to her home, carry a mobile phone.

If a client leaves belongings behind at the refuge

- If belongings are left at the refuge, put them in garbage bags and label them with client's name and the date and make a note this in the client's file.
- Store left belongings in (*insert location*).
- Try to contact the client and make arrangements for them to pick these belongings up.
- If the client cannot be contacted, hold belongings for (*insert time*) and then donate to a charity. Note this in the client's file.