

# Human service career advice for beginning professionals essay

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Human service provision is a concept which refers to the provision of services that are useful in offering solutions to challenges facing humanity. Such challenges include water supply shortage, information services, banking, counseling, health care services, the list is endless.

I have for the last fifteen years worked as a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of a Community Based Organization (CBO) which deals with substance abuse and mental problems.

In this paper, I will give advice to professionals who are beginners in human service provision. I will give guidelines on issues of human service such as confidentiality, barrier identification, making and evaluation of referrals, and timeliness and referrals. Furthermore, I will guide the young professionals on developing a community service plan, with a focus on mental health and abuse of substances. In the paper too, I will describe the need for the human service providers to advocate for the needs of the people in their local communities and the need for them to be served by the agency. Finally in this paper, I will give the most important lessons I have learnt, having worked with people in the jobs of human service.

To serve the targeted consumers of the services appropriately, professionals in these careers need a number of skills which are mandatory. These skills include among others: good communication skills, relational skills, good understanding of the target community you are serving e. g. their culture, needs and preferences; and an understanding of the professional requirements (professionalism) etc. (Davies & Martin, 2002)

To begin with, there are several factors in human service workers taking up careers in this field need to know. First, there is need for confidentiality.

According to the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), confidentiality entails ensuring that information is given only to those authorized to receive it or those entitled to it alone.

As a human service professional, you should provide your clients with documents (information) that in clear language and in a communicative manner fully describe the nature, extent and risks of the services you are providing. This information should inform the client on termination of the services (which procedure should the client follow), and the consequences that underlie termination. This information is indeed important because any client would want to fully understand the service you are providing and the risks involved, and may at one point consider terminating the service for different reasons. The client would also want to know the limitations or extents of your services (Davies & Martin 2002).

It also important that you as the service provider, you may identify the barriers to the services you are offering. To do this effectively, you have to understand your clients closely and come up with programs which will counter their problems in relation to the project. For example, if the project concerns provision of aid to victims of substance and drug abuse, you might establish that stigma may be a barrier, making the victims shy away from the project. In this case, as a service provider, you should come up with a sensitization programme which will help you fight the stigma challenge. Gertler, Martinez & Premand (2001) say that many human oriented service provisions are bound to fail if the providers do not detect or foretell the barriers they are likely to face and come up with the strategies for addressing them.

The professionals must also provide the client with the guideline for the making and evaluation of referrals. This is because the client may want to get the services from another agency for example, in the event of migration. In such a case then, it is important that the client leaves for you the contacts of the next agency, which you will use to gather information for evaluation of referrals. Gertler, Martinez & Premand (2001) emphasize that impact evaluation helps understand the scope of effects of an occurrence. Equally, in referral evaluation, you can make a follow up and understand better the quality of services the client has received from a different agency. This may help you in making modifications to your services.

In some cases, you may have clients who require imminent timely referral, for example those with severe impacts of substance abuse. In such a case you must outline clearly the time frame within which the referral must be effected. This timely intervention usually helps the agency assist the client in areas beyond the agency's reach in good time (BBC news).

Such a clear outline of time schedules within which the referral has to be effected puts you on toes in aid of the client. Should the referral fail within the stipulated time, then it is important that the client gets contacted immediately to come in for a follow up appointment. You as a service provider should also have referral flow charts. These must be based on different client problems you are dealing with and should be strategically positioned e. g. on notice boards to give the clients information on their problems and how they will be assisted. The flow chart must be procedural and attractive to the sight of the reader. It should use very simple language. It is very important that as a professional in any agency, you should ensure

that the agency has a community service plan. This plan identifies the different problems your clients are suffering of and develops the appropriate strategies that will help in the addressing of the problems. For example, your clients could be victims of substance abuse and people with mental health complications.

In your community plan based on the above problem, you should device means of expanding outpatient services which should run around the clock, you must have the support of the community, must tap psychiatrist services and treatment services for alcohol and drug use and abuse, and conduct referrals to other agencies when necessary.

In your plan too, you should show how and the importance of providing the clients with prevention and intervention, for example by giving them the support of the community which helps them avoid any problem e. g. of perceiving themselves as societal outcasts due to stigma and communal distancing from them. The support from the client's community can be used alongside the services offered by psychiatrist and doctor for alcohol and drug treatment because it gives the client assistance from their peers.

Substance abuse has serious ramifications on the users. The addicts are low or poor performers in the development of the local community. Their productivity is retarded and alongside this, drug abuse affects the brain. People with mental problems cannot fully participate in the development strategies and this therefore implies that such a community is bound to be poor. According to Encarta, poverty is the insufficiency of basic human needs such as clean water, food, education, healthcare, shelter and clothing, due to inability to afford them.

The agency needs to address the needs of the local community because it exists in their interest-to help them. The agency is thus instituted to serve the community. Should the agency not consider the interest of the local community e. g. by addressing issues that are impertinent with the needs of the community, it is possible that the community will turn against the project, something which is hazardous to the existence of the project. The local community gives the relevant required support, to the agency, an example being security.

This agency therefore needs to put the interest of the local community first because it is from this community that its clients come from. If it is not in line with the interests therefore, the potential clients are likely to be incited by the community leaders not to go to the facility. (Gertler, Martinez & Premand, 2001)

In this case, the agency deals with offering services related to substance abuse and mental challenges. Then this means that for this agency to exist, it must be established that it is within the interest of the local community that these challenges may be addressed. A survey must have been conducted for instance, to establish the validity and viability of this project, putting the local community first as the beneficiaries of the project. It must be established in reality that the two problems exist in the society and need to be addressed urgently to save the current situation. If not so, the local community will not support the idea and it is bound to fail.

In the course of working with people in my human service jobs, I have learnt very important ideas.

First, I have learnt the need to put other people first. In human service jobs,

you are serving other people and not yourself. Owing to this fact, it is therefore very important that you may put the interests of your clients first. They are your bosses and you are their servant. If you put your interests first, you will be serving yourself and not your clients and your business is headed for doom.

Davies & Martin (2002) say that in social work, it is indispensable that the social worker puts first the interests of the society he or she is serving. The professional must understand the community a great deal and even closely, the culture of the society. He must create a good working environment with the society for which he works.

As a social worker with immigrants, I have learnt that good communication and effective coordination skills are crucial in human service. You must communicate effectively with the people you are serving for your service to be of benefit to them. Through good communication skills, you can easily establish the needs of your clients. They become friendly and open to you, letting you know all their problems. You are also able to get feedback from them, which helps you in evaluation of the work you have done. Coordination helps in smooth flow of activities during implementation of strategies. In cases where language barrier is an obstacle, you should even employ a translator because communication is the lifeline of social work (Pallasana & Balgopal, 2000).

### Conclusion

In summary, human service profession is client centered and not professional centered. The interests of the client are put first and the objectives of the agency must seek to provide solutions to pertinent issues

with the client. It is important therefore to conduct a search to verify the needs of the client so that the agency will remain useful and relevant to the client.

This paper has served as a source of guideline and advice to beginners in the field of human service. It provides very useful guidelines that must be considered for any human service delivery project to succeed. This indeed is a good guide for professionals and potential professionals in the field of human service.

## **References**

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