

Team members share a common purpose when they pool their knowledge, ideas, and plans.

The persons who make up interdisciplinary teams have their particular expertise and responsibilities. Team members share a common purpose as they meet to pool knowledge, ideas, and plans for intervention. Interdisciplinary teams offer a framework within which specialists can work together to provide services for the whole client.

Students need to understand the overall purpose of a particular team, who makes up the team, how membership is decided, and its agreed goals. The goals determine how often the team members will meet and how they will reach and implement decisions. It is also helpful to know the backgrounds of the individual team members and their philosophies, roles, and attitudes. The pooling of members' unique perspectives allows for consideration of the problem from many different angles. These points of view justify each person's inclusion on the team.

If you are expected to be an active team member rather than an observer, do not be intimidated. You may have information not acquired by other professionals or a better relationship with the client that has allowed new information to sift out. Especially if you have had an opportunity to see the client in a different capacity (e.g., with other clients or family members), your insights will be valued.

When you are not speaking, listen carefully to what each person is saying. Come prepared and be familiar with the cases that are to be discussed. Facilitate communication, provide information useful for problem solving, and see that arrangements are made for any needed coordination of services. Note that agencies usually schedule a particular day a week certain days a month for their staff meetings. You will usually be expected to arrange your schedule so that you can attend these meetings.

CAN A FRIEND SUPERVISE ME?

Occasionally a student will discover that a friend has obtained a position in an agency and would be willing to provide supervision. As a rule, students should avoid seeking placements where friends, neighbors, family members, or others who might be less than objective would be the supervisor. Asking someone with whom you have a close relationship to supervise you likely would not be approved by your faculty field liaison and could get you into trouble if discovered later. For you to optimize your learning and grow professionally, it is necessary that your agency supervisor's objectivity not be impaired.

SHOULD I CONTRACT WITH CLIENTS?

We believe that students are generally well advised to contract with their clients. Before we share some ideas about developing effective contracts with clients, however, we want to briefly discuss the concept of contract and its importance in social work practice.

The *Social Work Dictionary* (third edition) defines a *contract* as a "written, oral, or implied agreement between the client and the social worker as to the goals, methods, timetables, and mutual obligations to be fulfilled during the intervention process." A contract ensures accountability for all parties in performing the tasks essential for the agreed goals. Contracts are not

always written; however, more and more social service agencies are moving in that direction.

The importance of a contract with a client follows from basic social work values, particularly the client's right to self-determination. Social work is not something done to clients; it is conducted with their cooperative efforts. Clients are expected to identify and rate the priority of their needs. Unless incapacitated, they are in the best position to determine what will be helpful to them (i.e., what courses of action to pursue) and when their needs have been met. Goals cannot be chosen for clients; they result from discussion, clarification, and other social work processes. During the course of intervention, a contract helps both social worker and client stay focused on the purpose of their work together. In addition to stating the agreed goals, the contract specifies the activities or interventions to be used, their frequency, any fees, and other agreements.

The essentials for developing contracts—discussed in Chapter 3—were derived from the SPIRO model (Pfeiffer & Jones, 1972)—which suggests (1) that *specific* goals be written, (2) that these goals be *performance* oriented, (3) that the *involvement* (roles) of the respective parties be stated, (4) that goals be *realistic* (feasible), and (5) that the results of your efforts be *observable* (measurable).

Contracting entails much more than we can tell you in this brief section. (If you need more information on the topic, you are encouraged to consult Hepworth, Rooney, & Larsen, 2002; or Sheafor, Horejsi, & Horejsi, 2000.)

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT AGENCY RECORDING?

Recording is an essential part of social work practice. The profession has always emphasized recording for two important reasons. First, it is assumed that there is an essential connection between good recording and the effectiveness of service. Second, recording is required in all types of practice in varied fields and settings. Its importance has been aptly explained by Siporin (1975): "The recording registers significant facts, evidence, judgments, and decisions about the people, problems and situations involved; it defines the reality of the helping situation and experience; presents the quantity and quality of service; and describes and explains the course of helping action" (p. 332).

Recording in social work may take many forms, from process recording—which involves a detailed narrative of all that happened during a client contact—to summary recording and the use of face sheets (intake or admission forms), agency documents, and reports of various kinds. Kagle (1984) has succinctly identified multiple ways that social service records can be used: to assess client and community needs; document services received and the continuity of care; communicate with others providing services to the client; supervise, consult, and educate students and workers; share information with the client; evaluate the process, quality, and impact of service; make administrative decisions; and do research.

Field instructors will orient their student interns to the recording requirements of their agencies and will help students learn how to fill out the various forms according to the breadth and depth of specificity required. Record keeping can also be a valuable tool in students' own professional growth. Although it would be impossible to prepare students for every type of form that they will