

ASSISTANCE SPECIALIST

JOB PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

This is community service work providing intake services, advocacy, referral and assistance to county citizens who may be low-income, homeless, elderly, handicapped, or have other special needs.

Incumbents within this classification conduct intake interviews with needy families and individuals, referred by local social service agencies, to determine eligibility for services from the Department of Community Services. Once eligibility is established, incumbents work with clients in assessing needs and in developing action plans designed to meet those needs. Homeless clients are expected to follow the plan during their stay at the Emergency Shelter. In addition, incumbents may acquaint clients with techniques to effectively utilize local, state or federal service agencies. Occasionally, incumbents may serve as advocates for clients through direct contact with the agencies. During the assigned work shift, incumbents may be required to intervene in crisis situations involving clients. At the homeless shelter, these may involve domestic violence, fights, children left unattended, and other circumstances demanding immediate attention.

Knowledge of the needs and issues of low-income and disadvantaged, and skill in counseling and interviewing are required for the performance of duties. In addition, knowledge of, and skill in applying crisis intervention techniques and knowledge of local social services are essential.

The work requires accurate maintenance and compilation of records and data regarding services provided and referrals made.

General guidelines are available in the form of standard procedures and grant regulations. However, employees may be confronted with situations in which they must use considerable initiative and judgment in interpreting or applying guidelines.

Personal contacts are essential to the Assistance Specialist classification. The incumbents have daily contact with low income clients using and/or seeking services, service providers and Community Services Department employees. The purpose of the contract is to provide, clarify or obtain facts or information related to client eligibility, service availability and regional issues of low income, disadvantaged and homeless.

CLASSIFICATION DISTINCTIONS

Incumbents report to an assigned supervisor. Incumbents perform work within standard procedures and established guidelines. However, latitude in making independent judgments is expected within those guidelines as a result of the variability of the situations encountered in the work. Additionally, incumbents may be working without immediate accessibility to the supervisor. Work

is evaluated through periodic review of client case files and records and regular conferences for effectiveness and results obtained.

Although supervision is not a requirement of the job, incumbents may be expected to provide guidance to volunteer workers.

KEY OR TYPICAL TASKS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Interviews clients and establishes eligibility for Department and other human services; develops action plans for clients intended to guide them in resolving their housing and personal problems.
- Makes referrals to other service providers; intercedes with other providers to assist clients in securing services, clarifying requirements and locating needed services.
- Conducts client follow-up counseling sessions to aid clients in establishing an income, other living situations and in addressing the conditions which resulted in the crisis.
- Regularly inspects Shelter to maintain security and safety of residents and to insure compliance with program rules and regulations.
- Responds to crises situations, such as fights, unattended children, medical emergencies and domestic violence.
- Maintains files and records and prepares regular and periodic reports on service levels and client eligibility and as required by grantor agencies.
- Performs related duties as assigned.

QUALIFICATIONS

- Two (2) years direct experience providing human services to target populations such as homeless, low-income, elderly or handicapped,

- OR -

- A combination, totaling two (2) years, of college level course work with an emphasis in social or behavioral sciences and experience providing direct human services.

Knowledge of....community-level human services resources and programs; information and referral systems, tracking and delivery; local, state and federal regulations governing energy assistance, surplus foods and other services provided through the Community Services Department; needs and

problems of the homeless, low-income, elderly, handicapped or others with special needs; crisis intervention techniques.

Ability to....establish and maintain effective working relationships with a wide and diverse range of others, such as utility agency employees, community groups, state-level human service providers and target population groups; conduct interviews with clients to gather sensitive personal information and to communicate information regarding eligibility for receipt of services; dilute and resolve potentially volatile actions of clients; maintain accurate records and to communicate effectively both orally and in writing.

WORK ENVIRONMENT AND PHYSICAL DEMANDS

The work environment has various disagreeable elements. The incumbents must deal with anger, hostility, and low self-esteem of the clients which may result in disruptive behavior and necessitate crisis interventions. Twenty-four hour staff coverage is required at the Emergency Shelter. Consequently, non-standard hours may be scheduled for the Assistance Specialists assigned to the Shelter.

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