



Best Practices for School Settlement Workers

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Introduction

The best practices manual should be used as:

- a guide to assist organizational change
- a training resource
- a resource to support the implementation of SWIS wide protocols
- a resource to support continuous improvements in services

The manual is an opportunity for SWIS projects to consider their present practices and how to meet the needs of their clients. Where changes are necessary, careful planning and support should be considered to ensure that changes are incremental and implemented in a cooperative way.

Service Standards

When providing service to a client, the SW shall provide services that;

- respond to the needs identified by the client
- are confidential
- are culturally appropriate
- are non judgmental
- are inclusive and accessible
- help remove barriers to settlement and integration
- foster client independence and empowerment

Role of SW

1. Establish and maintain contact with newcomer families in order to determine their needs and issues.
2. Provide settlement services and information to newcomer families about services and resources that enhance the settlement process.



3. Link newcomer families to resources and services in school and the community.
4. Facilitate access to services and resources where there are barriers due to language, gender, age, culture and race. Promote culturally sensitive links between school staff and newcomer families.
5. Present the needs and concerns of newcomer families to the school and service providers.
6. Maintain updated information on services, resources and policies that are relevant to the school and community settlement process.
7. Maintain up to date client files and statistical information and ensure the confidentiality of client information.

Tasks

- Providing information
- Referral
- Providing support and encouragement
- Enabling clients to deal with problems of adjustment
- Make telephone calls to get information for clients
- Newcomer orientation
- Obtain information and process on behalf of clients
- Organize group sessions
- Outreach
- Consulting with school staff on settlement (and cultural?) issues
- Cultural interpretation
- Interview and assess settlement needs
- Filing out simple forms

Contact with Clients

SWIS Clients

SWIS is an outreach program to provide initial settlement services to the newly arrived. SWs should make every reasonable effort to contact all potential clients. The settlement needs of elementary school age children are best met by providing outreach and services to their parents or guardians. The settlement needs of youth are best met by providing outreach and services directly to them. Accordingly, in elementary schools the SWIS clients are parents and in secondary schools, the clients are students and their parents.

The SW should focus their outreach on the newly arrived and on clients with first year settlement needs although services should not be denied to other elementary school parents and secondary schools students and parents in that school who request help.

Experience shows that clients are most responsive to meeting with the SW during their first few months in the community.



SWs who are well established in a school or community, may find that many parents will learn about their services through the community network and will approach them with minimal outreach.

Receiving Newcomer Client Contact Information

In each school, a system will be put in place so that the SW regularly receives client contact information from the school. The system will be communicated to the worker by the coordinator and the school contact person.

Ensuring Confidentiality of Client Contact Information

SWs shall ensure that all client contact information remains confidential and is kept in a safe and secure place. The information shall only be used for contacting clients about settlement issues. When receiving client contact information, SWs should assure school staff that the information will remain confidential and only be used for settlement purposes.

Contacting Parents In Person

When newcomer families are in the school, SWs should introduce themselves and promote their services. Useful ways to meet families in person are;

- at registration
- when parents bring their children to school or pick them up
- at school events or meetings
- at welcome to school group sessions

Contacting Hard to Reach Parents

Some parents are difficult to reach. Useful strategies include;

- calling them in the evening
- mailing them a note or sending it home with the student
- meeting them at parent events, such as parent teacher interviews

Contacting Parents by Phone

SWs should attempt to contact newly arrived parents by telephone at least three times. The calls should be at different times of the day.

When contacting the client the SW should

- give their name and explain that they are calling from the school and that it is not an emergency
- explain that they are working with the school to contact all newcomers
- describe their role and give several concrete examples of how they can help the newcomer: employment – arrange a meeting with an employment counselor, health – help finding a family doctor, school – help them get information or talk to school staff
- take notes



- give their contact information to the client – telephone number, days in the school, room number...
- with the student, send home a brochure

Contacting Secondary School Students

Secondary school students shall be contacted at school. The system for contacting them shall be determined by the school contact person and the SW. Possible contact strategies include;

- Making a presentation to the classes and student clubs
- Displays
- Special meetings for newcomer students
- Obtaining telephone numbers from the school
- Brochures, school newsletter
- Working directly with staff such as the guidance counselor

Contacting Secondary School Parents

In each secondary school, a system will be put in place so that the SW regularly receives client contact information from the school. Useful ways to contact secondary school parents are;

- By telephone
- Through siblings in elementary schools
- By collaborating with the student's teacher-advisor
- At registration
- At group sessions on post secondary issues
- At school events such as parent teachers interviews

Meeting with a Client for the First Time

When meeting a client for the first time, the SW should consider;

- Does the client have a specific concern that needs to be addressed,
or,
- Is the client expecting a general orientation and assessment?

If the client has specific needs, the SW should address those needs first before considering a general orientation. Once the SW has dealt with the client's immediate needs, the SW should offer to do a general assessment of the client's needs.

Intake

All clients must go through the client intake process. The intake can be done before or after services are provided.

Each project shall have a standard form for client intake and maintain a master list to record all family codes and client contact data. At monthly intervals, the master list shall be sent



electronically to the coordinator. Each project shall develop its own electronic forms and guidelines for the transfer of data to the laptop and onto the tracking form.

If the client asks, the SW should explain that the information is being collected for agency records and that it is kept confidential.

Assessment

Each project should develop separate assessment checklists (a comprehensive list of assessment questions) to use with parents and secondary school students. The checklists should be available in paper and electronic formats. The SW should review the checklist with clients to determine client needs and to demonstrate the range of ways that the SW can be helpful.

Notes from the assessment shall be recorded and transferred to the laptop.

Confidentiality

The client’s right to confidentiality is defined by school board and agency policies and by the Child Family Services Act (CFSA). SWs should be familiar with the various policies and must request support from their coordinator when they have any doubt about the confidentiality of client information. Each worker should have a copy of the relevant sections of the CFSA and the school board and agency policies.

The client’s right to confidentiality may vary if the client is 16 years of age or over. See appendix for a summary of the Child Family Services Act.

Arranging for the Assistance of Another Settlement Worker

SWs are encouraged to make arrangements for support from fellow SWs or ISAP workers. Where practical, the SW should arrange a conference call with the client and the other SW.

When arranging for a worker to be present with the client, arrangements should be made as follows.

Within same project	SW to SW	Alert coordinator
Within SWIS	SW to SW	Alert coordinator
Within same agency	SW to SW	Referral form
From another agency	SW to SW	Alert coordinator

A visiting SW should be advised of the school’s visitor protocols. The school office staff should be advised when a SW is coming to the school.

Maintaining Information Resources for Clients at the School

With the support of their coordinators, SWs should maintain up to date information about community resources. The information can be organized in binders, file folders or on the laptop as appropriate.



Each project should consider the different kinds of information that SWs should maintain. There are different kinds of information:

- Materials that should be kept in quantity to be given out to clients
- Materials that can be copied as needed
- Materials that can be stored in the laptop and printed out as needed
- Materials for displays
- Materials that are listed on community and agency information web site

Communicating with the School

Meeting with the Principal or Contact Person to Provide Feedback and Plan Work

The purpose of meeting regularly with the Principal or contact person is to establish an ongoing mechanism for reviewing and planning the work of the SW.

In schools where a SW regularly provides service, the SW and the Principal or contact person should meet at appropriate intervals to review and plan the work of the SW. The participation of the coordinator in this meeting shall be determined by each project.

For this meeting, the SW should prepare statistics that reflect recent work. The worker should also be prepared to present an analysis of their work, including;

- a comparison of the clients with the demographics of the newly arrived in that school.
- the nature of the services, individual and group sessions
- feedback from clients and staff
- what worked and what didn't
- trends

The worker should also be prepared to discuss;

- Plans for the upcoming period of time, including group sessions.
- The school's plans for parents in the coming period and how (within their role) the SW can support the participation of the newly arrived in those plans.

Feedback on the meeting should be provided to the coordinator, if she/he is not present at the meeting.

Sources of Demographic Information about a School

In addition to the demographic information that coordinators can obtain on OTIS and from the School Board, SWs may be able to get information about the languages spoken, year of arrival or country of birth from the principal, contact person or from the office administrator's records.



Staying Informed About School Activities

The SW should discuss with the principal or contact person how they will receive information about what is going on in the school. This may be done by email or a mail box. The worker should stay informed about all the activities and programs in the school.

When The Administration Changes

Changes in school administrators are usually made in September and January. If there a change in the Principal or Vice-Principal, in consultation with the coordinator, the SW should arrange a meeting with the new administrator to explain their role, review current plans and newcomer issues.

Communicating with the School Staff

Until they are well established in a school, the SW should take advantage of opportunities to promote and explain their work and role to school staff. The presence of a SW in a school may be new to most school staff. In order to accelerate their understanding about the work of the SW, it is important that the SW communicate the nature of their work to all school staff. The SW may have to repeat some of their successful strategies each year. SWs and school staff should deal with each other on a collegial basis.

Successful strategies are;

- Maintaining a bulletin board of settlement information and resources
- Distributing a brochure describing the project that is personalized for that school
- Highlighting successful work in conversations with staff or in writing
- Providing demographic information to staff
- posting a photo of themselves
- Making a presentation to groups of staff (department meetings, teachers who work with clubs, teachers new to the school...) or at a staff meeting
- Providing interesting information about newcomers to school staff
- Information in the school newsletter
- Posting their schedule on their door

Problem Solving

From time to time, SWs may need to consider how to resolve problems in their relationships with clients or school staff. In addition to seeking support from their coordinator, the SW should;

- Define the issue, i.e. I can't get information from someone
- Ask themselves, Is this part of my role?
- Consider who else is involved in the issue, i.e. Ms. Jones and the Mr. Brown
- Consider solutions, i.e. I understand that you are supposed to give me this information, perhaps I am wrong, shall we clarify that with the coordinator and the principal, or...
- Propose and come to an agreement on a solution
- Seek assistance from their coordinator



Referrals From School Staff

Client Referrals from School Staff

School staff may approach the SW to contact a newcomer family about a school related issue.

When a SW begins work at a school, there should be a discussion with the contact person about how the SW should receive referrals from school staff and how the process will be communicated to school staff. The discussion should consider what the SW should do if he doesn't have the phone number of the family.

Possible referral strategies are; by email, through a referral form or in-person. Samples are in the appendix.

If the referral is made in writing, the SW should advise the school staff person that they have received the referral and when it is likely that contact will be attempted with the client and how you will give them feedback.

When a SW receives an in-person referral, the staff person should be advised when it is likely that contact will be attempted with the client and how you will give them feedback.

If the SW is having difficulty reaching the client, the staff person should be advised so that they can jointly consider the next steps.

Feedback to School Staff About a Client Referral

When a SW begins work at a school, there should be a discussion with the contact person about the protocol for giving feedback to school staff when a client has been referred to the SW.

Once a SW has received a referral from a school staff person, they should provide feedback to the staff person about their contact with the client.

Feedback could be given by email, by speaking to the staff member in person or with a feedback form or note that is put in the appropriate mail box.

Referrals to Community Agencies

Referrals to a Community Agency

SWIS is an information and referral outreach program and is one of many services for newcomers in the settlement sector. When a client has a long term issues that involve multiple contacts, considerable amounts of SW time or specialized services, the client should be referred to community resources such as an ISAP or legal clinic.



Some clients may have difficulty understanding why the SW cannot continue to help them and the SW should be prepared to reassure them:

- They will get more specialized service
- That they should get back in touch if they have a concern
- That the client knows the name and phone number of the contact person

Clients may resist referrals because they have confidence in the SW and do not want to have to establish a relationship with another SW.

Projects are encouraged to identify a contact person at community agencies who can be the key contact person for referrals.

When referring a client to a community resource, the SW should give the client a map showing how to get to the community agency. Maps can be downloaded from <http://maps.yahoo.com/>

Referrals are a good opportunity for some clients to practice accessing services on their own. SWs should consider whether the client can make their own appointment or if an appointment should be made for them.

Clients should not be accompanied to referrals.

SWs should encourage clients to call them after their first referral appointment and if they haven't heard from the client they should call them to see if the referral was successful.

When to Refer

A client should be referred to a community agency when:

- The client's problem is complex or needs specialized service
- The client needs professional counseling, e.g. legal, marital, social-emotional issues
- On several occasions, the worker has made calls and/or provided information to the client on the same issue and it appears that more assistance is required.
- Client's settlement needs cannot be addressed

Group Sessions

Group Sessions

Group sessions shall be organized in schools where a SW provides regular service. The group sessions shall be organized in consultation with the principal or the school contact person.

In proposing a topic for a group session, the SW shall consider client feedback, what has been successful, and what the newly arrived need to know.

In planning the session, the SW should consider the principles of effective workshop design.

- A room setup that promotes participation



- Name tags for all participants
- Refreshments
- An evaluation mechanism
- Presentations in first language
- Introductions and identification of what participants hope to learn
- Short and clear presentations – complex aspects of issues should be saved for the question period – let the questions identify what needs greater detail
- Activities for the participants
- The use of visuals and handouts to supplement the presentation
- The amount of time for questions and discussion should be at least equal to the length of the presentation.
- Interpretation where necessary
- Childcare
- Interpretation
- A thank you note to the appropriate people

Successful group session topics include; orientation to the school for newly arrived families, parenting strategies, learning a new language, report cards, employment for adults, employment for secondary school students, parks and recreation opportunities, finance, housing

Publicizing a Group Session

To publicize a group session, the SW should

- Contact the newly arrived by telephone
- School newsletter
- Post flyers, in translation, if possible
- Mention the session to clients who they see in person
- Put a copy of the flyer into teachers boxes
- Target specific communities

Working with Youth

The settlement needs of elementary students are best met through their parents, but the most effective way to deliver settlement services to youth is through direct service to them.

The challenges of adolescence are greatly compounded by the stresses of settlement. Immigrant youth feel pulled in opposite directions, between what seems to be irreconcilable values or cultures, and a desire to adapt and fit in their new homeland.

In secondary schools, in addition to contacting parents of newly arrived students, the SW will work with school staff to identify opportunities to provide information and referral services directly to youth.



The SW should be available to students during times when students are not in class.

School administrators and staff have the primary responsibility to ensure equitable access to school activities. SWs can assist them in their responsibility by;

- Providing information about newcomer communities
- Providing advice about how to communicate with newcomer youth
- Sharing successful school based strategies for involving newcomer youth in school activities, such as clubs, sports, leadership

The SW and the principal or contact person should consider the programs for newcomer youth that are available in the community and whether it is appropriate to link those programs with the school. Key leaders from those programs might be encouraged to visit the school to inform students about their programs or they might be offered joint use of school space.

Potential service providers who might be interested in linking more closely with schools are; Public health, parks and recreation, libraries, literacy programs, health centres, employment centres, community service agencies, & other settlement programs.

Group Workshops Specifically for Newcomer Youth

SWs shall develop workshops for newcomer youth on topics that relate to their immediate needs; eg. part time and summer employment, welcome to the school, the unwritten rules of school, the credit system.

To deliver these workshops, the SW should work with the appropriate resource person to define their respective roles, the learning outcomes, the publicity and the logistics.

Presentations to School Staff

SWs may be asked to make presentations to school staff about their role, the settlement process or about the community. When designing a workshop, the SW should follow these guidelines for an effective learning experience.

- The topic of the workshop should be discussed with a staff person to determine the specific learning outcomes. Alternately, the staff may be canvassed for their ideas. Consider how you can help teachers with the issues they are concerned about.
- School staff are not accustomed to lecture style presentations. They prefer short presentations and time for questions and discussions. When planning the program, the amount of time for questions and discussion should be twice as long as the length of the presentation from the front. For instance, in a half hour program, a ten minute presentation should allow for 20 minutes of discussion and questions.
- Make the presentations relevant to school issues. For instance, Halal food is relevant to teachers in the primary grades because some parents may ask their children not to accept



snack if they believe that it is not Halal. Similarly, it is relevant to other teachers who organize pizza days.

- Discuss the school culture with the principal, vice-principal or contact person. How are things done in that school? The attitude to presentations or workshops may vary from school to school.
- The length of time for the presentation should be clear. Short presentations should not exceed 30 minutes, after school presentations should not exceed 60 minutes.
- When planning the presentation, deal with the basic issues in the presentation and use the discussion time to add information about the more complex aspects of an issue. Don't try and accomplish too much. Give them a snapshot. Wet their appetite for more information. You want to be invited back.
- Ask yourself "what are the highlights of this issue", "what have I observed in my contact with clients", "what written material would complement the presentation"
- Invite all staff members; office administrators, caretakers, non teaching staff.
- Ask the principal or contact person to introduce you.
- Leave time at the end of the discussion to get feedback on other information that staff would like.

Consider presentations to specific groups of school staff; teachers who are new to the school, teachers in a department, office administrators, teachers who have approached you for support... The success of the presentation should not be measured by the number of participants.

Possible topics for school staff are; aspects of school life that newcomers parents typically have a hard time understanding, relevant cultural, political and social values that impact how students learn, war in the first country and how it affects newcomer children and their families, the settlement process and how a SW helps newcomers.

