

INFORMATION AND REFERRAL BILL OF RIGHTS

The Alliance of Information & Referral Systems supports practices that respect everyone's right to:

1. Accurate and comprehensive information about services.
2. Confidential and/or Anonymous access to information.
3. Assistance based on the inquirer's personal value system.
4. Treatment based on respect and sensitivity regardless of origin, age, background or views.
5. Barrier-free access to information.
6. Self-determination.
7. An appropriate level of support in obtaining services.
8. Be empowered to the extent possible.
9. The opportunity to access the most appropriate I&R service available in the system.

PHILOSOPHY OF INFORMATION AND REFERRAL

Information and referral specialists are unique in their understanding of and sensitivity to the needs of people seeking help and information. I&R specialists shall:

1. Attempt to understand each inquirer's situation including the origins of the difficulty, the feelings inquirers have about their circumstances, the personal resources inquirers may bring to bear on the issue, and the barriers to resolution of the problem.
2. Offer immediate and appropriate response when the individual is experiencing a crisis or other emergency situation.
3. Be available, not to solve inquirers' problems for them, but to empower inquirers to understand and solve their own problems.
4. Help inquirers prioritize their needs and build an action plan.
5. Help inquirers identify resources that can meet their needs.
6. Be careful not to overwhelm inquirers with a myriad of options or provide them with too few to allow them an informed choice.
7. Advocate on behalf of inquirers who require extra support to access necessary services either because they don't have the appropriate skills or because the service is difficult for the person to access.
8. Follow up on all cases involving endangerment and situations in which the specialist believes that the inquirer does not have the necessary capacity to follow through and resolve his or her problem.

SUMMARY OF STANDARDS

Each of the standards is summarized below for your reference. The detailed criteria that apply to each standard begins following this section.

I. SERVICE DELIVERY

The standards in Section I describe the service delivery functions essential for providing information and referral and assuring access for all, including a brief individual assessment of need; a blend of information,

referral and advocacy in order to link the person to the appropriate service; crisis intervention, when warranted; and follow-up, as required.

Standard 1: Information Provision

The I&R service shall provide information to an inquirer in response to a direct request for such information. Information can range from a limited response (such as an organization's name, telephone number, and address) to detailed data about community service systems (such as explaining how a group intake system works for a particular agency), agency policies, and procedures for application.

Standard 2: Referral Provision

The I&R service shall provide information and referral services in which the inquirer has one-to-one, human contact with an I&R specialist (paid or volunteer). The referral process consists of assessing the needs of the inquirer, identifying appropriate resources, assessing appropriate response modes, indicating organizations capable of meeting those needs, providing enough information about each organization to help inquirers make an informed choice, helping inquirers for whom services are unavailable by locating alternative resources, and, when necessary, actively participating in linking the inquirer to needed services.

Standard 3: Advocacy/Intervention

The I&R service shall offer advocacy, when necessary, to ensure that people receive the benefits and services to which they are entitled and that organizations within the established service delivery system meet the collective needs of the community. For purposes of these standards, "advocacy" does not include legislative advocacy (lobbying). All advocacy efforts shall be consistent with written policies established by the governing body of the I&R service and shall proceed only with the permission of the inquirer.

Standard 4: Crisis Intervention

Although most I&R services do not promote themselves as formal crisis intervention centers, most receive occasional requests for assistance from people in crisis and must therefore equip their staff to handle them appropriately. The I&R service shall be prepared to assess and meet the immediate, short-term needs of inquirers who are experiencing a crisis and contact the I&R service for assistance.

Included is assistance for individuals threatening suicide, homicide or assault; suicide survivors; victims of domestic abuse or other forms of violence, child abuse/neglect or elder/dependent adult abuse/neglect; sexual assault survivors; runaway youth; people experiencing a psychiatric emergency; chemically dependent people in crisis; survivors of a traumatic death; and others in distress.

Standard 5: Follow-Up

The I&R service shall have a written policy which addresses the conditions under which follow-up must be conducted. The policy shall mandate follow-up with inquirers in endangerment situations and in situations where the specialist believes that inquirers do not have the necessary capacity to follow through and resolve their problems. The policy must also specify a percentage of other inquiries for which follow-up is required in order to assess overall service performance. Additional assistance in locating or using services may be necessary.