

Designated Worker Guidelines

Overview:

The following guidelines are meant to assist staff when they conclude that a designated worker would provide better service to a client due to that client's individual circumstances. Current practice is to assign a designated worker if requested by a client or advocate.

While the 'Shared Service' delivery model provides the best level of service for clients in most circumstances and is the preferred method for meeting client needs, it is recognized that some clients with challenges such as cognitive functioning, a history of trauma, and/or special needs might be better served by having a designated worker.

When particular concerns around the 'Shared Service' delivery model are raised by or on behalf of clients or as otherwise identified, staff assess whether a designated worker is appropriate to meet the unique needs of the client. Staff may also identify a client with challenges or unique needs and proactively assign a designated worker on behalf of a client. The following principles and guidelines should be considered.

Principles:

- A designated worker may be appropriate in any situation where, by reason of a client's special needs, his or her access to services is made more difficult or rendered less effective by the Shared Service delivery model.
- Assignment of a designated worker is not intended to result in service being received exclusively from the designated worker. Even where a designated worker has been provided there will be occasions when another worker may provide service in place of the designated worker.
- Discretionary authority rests with the supervisor. The worker will discuss the case and the unique needs of the client with the supervisor and involve the client's support worker, family or friends when necessary.
- Consistent with these guidelines, protocols may be developed so that the process around how workers are assigned and how client files are managed fit in with the operation of the local office.
- Assessments and decisions relating to designated workers should be made in accordance with these guidelines.

Guidelines:

Shared service may be identified as an issue for a client by the office or by the client, an advocate, family member, caregiver, community agency or another ministry. In assessing the need for a designated worker, the following examples of situations where provisions of a designated worker might be appropriate may be used as guidelines.

- Clients with challenges such as cognitive functioning, a history of trauma, and/or special needs or similar challenges who may have difficulty communicating, or have challenging behaviours may need a designated worker. These include situations where a particular worker has established a rapport with, or may otherwise assist, the client with accessing ministry services.
- Difficult or complex cases requiring significant sensitivity and/or intensive case management.
- Where known, cases where individuals may be suffering from trauma related to violence, and particularly domestic violence, may benefit from dealing with a single worker or a same gender worker only.
- Difficult or complex cases, particularly where multiple people and agencies are involved inside or outside the ministry and/or where legal and human rights issues may exist or have a potential to develop.
- Where complaints are received about service delivery or quality and gaps are directly attributable to a conflict between the client's circumstances and shared services delivery.
- Cases where management of behaviour and/or service requests requires a high level of consistency in service, decisions and case management and it is determined that this would be facilitated by a designated worker.

All clients are provided equal access to service regardless of their background. Sometimes providing equal treatment means accommodating the needs and circumstances of the individual by providing a designated worker. It is not appropriate to assign a designated worker to a client based solely on their ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, family status, history of criminal involvement, and/or membership in a social group.

All staff are expected to be fair, impartial, non-judgmental, empathetic, and maintain confidentiality with each and every client. A designated worker serves the needs of a client who cannot access services due to a limitation of some sort and where their limitations prevent them from managing effectively with the 'Shared Service' Delivery Model.

Clients who receive a designated worker may need to contact the designated worker by telephone. To ensure clients have accessibility to the designated worker by telephone, staff may:

- give their phone number to the designated client if they have a direct line;
- advise the client to leave a message asking for their designated worker to call them back when they dial the 1-866 number; or
- announce the client's name to the designated worker before transferring the call when client asks for their designated worker.

There are rare occasions when a file is set up as "restricted", which means only one worker will have access to the file. These cases are unique in that a restriction is placed on the file due to certain legal privacy and protection needs