Handout 2: Policies, Procedures And Accountability

Policy & procedures

Policies are sometimes difficult to understand for many reasons. Each policy may have a procedure that sets out how to follow the policy. Policies are usually collected together in a policy and procedure manual. This manual is an instructions manual on how to operate the community agency.

Policies and procedures as an accountability mechanism

- For the client a policy and procedures manual should contain information on how to make complaints about the agency and how to give feedback to staff and management
- For volunteers and students on placement it should contain an orientation plan for new workers in the agency their rights and responsibilities and the expectations of the agency
- For the workers it should contain a code of conduct, legislative requirements such as mandatory reporting of suspected child abuse, disciplinary procedures, job descriptions, OH&S procedures and the role and functions of the agency
- For management the information will describe their role and responsibilities.

Who makes policy in a community organisation?

Policy is made by the management of the organisation. The workers may make suggestions and draft policy but the management must agree to the policy before it becomes part of the organisation rules.

Policies are often developed because of an incident where something happens and staff really don’t know what to do and find there is no policy to guide them. They deal with the issue then the organisation writes up a policy.

Effective Policies

How do we know whether a policy is effective or not?

Effective policies:
- Are structured clearly with a recognised sequence of steps
- Have clear and honest objectives
- Are useful for the intended people such as staff, clients, volunteers and management committees
- Cover all relevant areas relating to Federal, State and local government rules including requirements for government funding?
- Provide the framework for best practice?
- Assume an ability to draw lessons from policy experience and to apply that information in policy review
- Make a difference in the ways intended.