Negotiation: Student Welfare Co-ordinator

You are meeting with the co-ordinator of a secondary college who has suspended your client several times for aggressive behaviour. You are going to negotiate with the co-ordinator to enable your client to return to school. Prior to and during the negotiation stage there may be a number of issues that you may need to consider.

The Existing Relationship You Have with the Teacher and the School

If you have not developed a working relationship previously with the teacher and/or school you may find that the teacher perceives that you are overstepping your boundaries and should not be involved in a school matter. Not only will this alienate you from further involvement with the school but could also further alienate your client. Therefore it is going to be difficult to raise issues in relation to the student's possible return to the school. To avoid such situations it is useful to visit facilities and institutions, such as secondary colleges, that the young people you intend to work with attend. A general introductory meeting to introduce yourself and explain your role in supporting young people may valuable in opening up a two way communication and referral channel.

Case Management

There is often debate when working with young people at secondary college as to who has case management of the student. Case management within the school can be the responsibility of a number of staff and these can include the year level co-ordinator, the student welfare officer and the student school support officer. However, because of time restrictions and lack of resources some schools are reluctant to pick up case management and may expect you to case manage the client, which in some cases may not be possible. For example a youth worker can be limited by funding guidelines restricting the length of time they are involved with the client and/or the range of support they can provide. It is a good idea to clarify who has case management prior to face to face discussions to avoid any conflict.

Culture

The education and youth sector have cultural differences, ie, differences in the environment in which they operate and the processes they establish in order to deliver their service. In schools that service is education and within youth work it is support. There is an obvious need for some difference in culture, however these differences can lead to friction between the two disciplines. It would be advantageous to gain an understanding of the education sector and more particularly, the specific schools you may be working with to enable you to get an understanding of their culture. This may assist in ensuring that misunderstandings do not occur and better prepare you for negotiations.