

family

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Abstract

This paper is the description of the 'Social Unit Identification Policy' adopted by the Massachusetts Department of Mental Retardation. It is designed to recognise and ensure a continuity and stability of important relationships between people and staff who are being moved from institutions. **Keyword: Individualisation**

SOCIAL UNIT IDENTIFICATION

Definition of Social Unit: A grouping of people consisting of persons with mental retardation and the staff who work with them who have established from their working relationship a mutual friendship and/or an affinity that is based on insight and knowledge of the special needs of an individual with mental retardation.

Purpose/Benefits: The identification and maintenance of a Social Unit in the planning of transfers assures a continuity and stability of important relationships in the lives of individuals served.

When: The identification of the Social Unit is completed during the Placement Profile process.

How: A. Consumer Based

1. The consumer should identify those persons, including staff and other consumers, with whom she/he would like to live or to continue to work in her/his new home.

2. The consumer should identify those persons, including staff and other consumers, with whom she/he would not like to live or not like to continue to work in her/his new home.

B. Family Input - In the event the consumer is unable to provide identification of staff as noted above, parents and siblings of the consumer may wish to identify staff they would like to continue to work with their family member. In so identifying staff, the family should weigh such factors as:

1. Length of relationship

2. Specific achievements the staff member has accomplished with their family member

3. Specific skills and abilities the staff member possesses.

In the event the consumer is unable to provide identification of other consumers as noted above, parents and siblings of the consumer may wish to identify other consumers who they would like their family member to live with. In so identifying other consumers, the family should weigh such factors as:

1. Length of relationship

2. Past positive activities and experiences shared between consumers

3. Similarities and differences in interests, hobbies and personal preferences.

C. After identification of the Social Unit has been completed, the maintenance of the Social Unit upon transfer to a state operated residential program is to be attempted by the team compiling the Placement Profile. The maintenance of the Social Unit is dependent on such factors as to whether the staff member

identified as being part of the Social Unit wishes to move to the community setting with the consumer, whether there is a mutuality of interest between the consumers identified as being part of the Social Unit and such other factors may be presented to the team completing the Placement Profile. It is foreseen that this process is one involving a weighing of interests and preferences of the consumers, their family members, and the identified staff as being part of the Social Unit in an effort to assure the continuity and stability of important relationships of the persons served to the maximum extent possible.