Bethany Care Ltd

Social & Community Integration
Policy & Procedure 46

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Contents

1. Object & Field of Application

1.1. This document details the policy adopted by Bethany Care Ltd (BCL) to ensure its service provision, programs and activities facilitate the inclusion of people with a disability into the life of the community.

2. References

2.1. Community Linking workshop (2006)

2.2. Community Resource Unit INC

3. Definitions

3.1. Community: A group of people living in the same locality and under the same government.

3.2. Society: The totality of social relationships among humans. Persons as an organized body: community, people, public. See specific/general.

3.3. Integration: The bringing of people of different social groups into unrestricted and equal association, as in society or an organization; desegregation.

4. General

How Bethany Care Views Community Linking –

4.1. Bethany Care views community linking as highly relevant to its clients' individual needs. Studies tell us people with disabilities are more likely to be subject to prejudice and social devaluation. Effective community linking may go some way to reduce any previous negative experiences connected to these issues.

4.2. Successful community linking may result in a positive re-defining of the individual. Both human services and community citizens have a responsibility to initiate and lead in this area.

4.3. Community linking can be defined as "the deliberate and conscious act of identifying and maximising social connectedness of an interdependent nature with families, friends, neighbours, neighbourhood associations, clubs, civic groups, businesses, churches, temples, ethnic organisations, schools, government etc".

Foundational principles

4.4. People with disabilities have a place in the community and capacity to contribute to the development of community.

4.5. Some community members have the capacity and willingness to welcome people with disabilities and their families.

5. Strategies & Considerations for Community Connection & Inclusion

5.1. Basic Strategies

1. Focus on the individual - Look for the unique gifts, talents, interests and contributions of the individual with a disability.

2. Focus on the community - Look for the opportunities available.

3. Identify the best Individual / Community match

4. Build inter-dependency between individuals and/or community

5. Secure the relationship

6. Monitor and "fade out" over time

7. Let go

5.2. Helpful Tips for Personal Carers

- Be open to listening, trusting and accepting others.

- Break the cycle of isolation. Look for ways to bring the person in everyday contact with a range of other people, for example

    – Small businesses e.g. local deli, newsagents

    – Public places e.g. Libraries, community centres

    – Associations and Clubs e.g. hobby groups, sports clubs

- Search and focus on the person's ticket out of isolation. Search for individual strengths and capabilities and focus on the person as a whole. Find that one special attribute that could help facilitate a meaningful connection.

- Ask People. Don't wait for that extraordinary person to come along – consider whether ordinary people hold the key to showing others hospitality and friendship.

- Trust the wisdom of the community. Brainstorming with others produces ideas that no single person could have gathered.

- Strengthen and rekindle existing relationships. Play a part in nurturing those relationships that already exist.

- Use your imagination. Believe in the vision that people who have been marginalised can be accepted!

- Find and work with bridge- builders. Bridge builders are people who have a wide range of connections in the community. They can assist in introducing an individual to others.

- Consider the importance of rhythms and routines. It is often good to do things at the same time at the same price.

- Recognise the importance of the simple and ordinary. Celebrate with things that are actually quite significant, like meeting a neighbour.

- Give people the space to sort out differences and work through issues. Think about whether it is appropriate to "step in" or whether the situation can be sorted through by itself.

- Don't look for an ironclad guarantee of success. There may be no perfect solution so you have to trust the process.

- Be willing to let go. You cannot direct outcomes or maintain overzealous involvement. Be willing to let things take their course.

- Know the bottom line. Consider how money can be best spent to facilitate this work.

- Focus on opportunities for relationships rather than on activities. Some activities hold more opportunities for meeting and getting to know people than others.

- Encourage everyone. People can easily become reluctant or discouraged.

- Keep your eyes open for opportunities. It's important to keep looking and to keep asking (e.g. read local paper)

- Know the community. Find out what organisations exist, who belongs to them, where there is to go, and what there is to do. Find community leaders or people who know everybody and what's going on.

- Work with moments of openness. Respond to opportunities for developing relationships when people are more open. Times of change, cycles, crisis, celebration or chance are times when people are open to the possibility of meaningful friendship.

5.3. Understanding Relationships

- Relationships are probabilistic; that is, there is always potential for relationships to form but never certainty that they will.

- People have a range of relationships, from acquaintances to lovers, which provide socially integrative lives.

- There is no real logic to relationships. Relationships do not proceed sequentially or linearly. Painful struggle is often a sign of growth in relationships and setbacks are typical; conflict should not be feared. Absences do not spell the end of relationships.

- Rejection in relationships is part of making relationships; it is typical for all of us to meet people who will not choose to build relationships.

- Relationships build slowly and strengthen over time. They are full of episodes, incidents, and experiences that can be strung together.

- Relationships start from small beginnings and don't always start out close-knit. Trust builds over time. The potential of a relationship cannot be judged from one meeting.

- Experiences, opportunities, and relationships are all connected to each other. The more opportunities a person has, the more likely the person is to have relationships.

- Confidence in relationship building grows over time. Avoid looking for immediate results.

- Relationships are never fully developed; they are always in a state of growth.

- Relationships are not the function of a person's attributes (i.e. skills, abilities, assets) but more commonly a function of establishing ease and comfort between people.

6. Evaluation

6.1. What Community linking is not

- Dumping individual in the community without relevant support

- Facilitating group activities of a segregated nature

- "One-off" events

- Meeting the needs of human service workers

- Easy, predictable, controlled & guaranteed.

6.2. Some questions for carers to reflect upon

1. How better connected is this person because of my work with them?

2. How many relationships have deepened or been initiated because of my time with this person?

3. What strategies have I used to strengthen or build this person's connectedness?

4. How much of my time with this person is in the company of others? Who have we spent time with? How?

5. If paid workers had to withdraw from this person's life, who else would be responding to them as a result of our work?

6. Do I have a clear understanding of this person's gifts, interests and capacities? How have I worked with these?

6.3. Community Linking Indicators

- Good individual / community match

- Clear level of commitment between all key stakeholders

- Clearly defined evidence of contributions offered

- Clearly reduced dependency on the service

7. Potential Challenges

7.1. Building community for people who may not talk or who have poor reputations in their communities

Many bridge-builders find themselves stuck when trying to build community for people who may not talk or who have poor reputations in their communities. The following strategies may help people to find creative responses to complex situations.

- Spend a lot more time with people when they can't speak or if they have bad reputations.

- Spend a lot more time getting to know people, and then spend a lot more time escorting people to places and building relationships with someone new.

- Model effective responses for newcomers – you have to stay in the picture to be a good model.

- Always find an ally first before bringing someone into the group. Find the most valued member of a group to bring a person in.

- Go with the person with a disability long enough to find out what they want and need, and how they respond in new situations. Stay long enough to know that someone else will take over in your absence.

- Bottom line; do more groundwork, spend more time with the person, stay in the picture for as long as you are needed.

- Remember that a lot of people with disabilities are afraid to go into community. Stay sensitive to the need they may have for a familiar escort.

- People who have made few choices may seem disinterested. Be there no matter what. Stand by people as they are learning about power and go through all the manner of hesitation. Be there.

7.2. Things that can go Wrong When Pursuing Social Inclusion

- Rejection. Some people will be frightened or feel extremely uncomfortable with people that have experienced a very different life to themselves. People reject what they are familiar with or what they don't understand. This applies in particular to behaviours that people may find threatening.

- The individual you are trying to help may not want to be a regular part of the community. People have a right to choose the lives they want to, even if it seems a more unpleasant option.

- Relationships don't always last. While programs and services can seem to go on forever, relationships are very fragile. The test of time as to whether relationships survive is something that everyone experiences.

- The community may not want to take on that responsibility. Everyone has their limits and sometimes people will think that services need to take responsibility for all aspects of a person's life, rather than the support gained from informal relationships. Some people will state that it is not appropriate for them to extend themselves because they are not trained or qualified to work with such people.

- Is this kind of work only an illusion?   How do we keep it going without setting up some kind of formalised system? The challenge of this work is to free people from the system, while not creating another one.

8. Appendices - Alternative Strategies to Increase Social Contact

8.1. Agency-based Volunteer Program

Strengths:	Weaknesses:
• Straightforward to do • Within agency power to do • Structuring orientation/support is easy	• Potential volunteers to agency – not friends to people • Independence / naturalness more difficult to achieve • Tensions within agency • Tends not to lead to added others

8.2. Worker's Networks

Strengths:	Weaknesses:

• Support/orientation informally is easy
• Others are already there
• Natural Process of recruitment
• Added other involvement likely
	• Relationships can be dependent on worker presence
	• Model of staff/client relationship
	• Supporter in role confusion
	    o Agency
	    o Person served
	    o Other friend
	• Tends not to lead to more people

8.3. Changing the person

Strengths:	Weaknesses:
• Growth in relationships very possible • Independence from paid service roles • Added others becoming involved is likely • Duration can be long	• Recruitment not supported/may never happen • Orientation/support very difficult/intrusive • Duration can be unnoticed • Person to blame and responsible • Sets person as responsible – they may not have the skills confidence

8.4. Urging "Others" to Reach Out to a Person

Strengths:	Weaknesses:
• Orientation possible before contact • Added others involvement likely • Growth / independence of relationship • Duration may be long	• Recruitment uncertain • Support difficult (tends towards agency volunteer program) • Duration uncertain

8.5. Involving People in New Activities & Groups

Strengths:	Weaknesses:
• Many natural contacts • Natural/informal orientation opportunities • Relationships independent of agencies • Added others involvement very likely	• Relationships expanding to other contacts may take a long time • Formal orientation very hard/unnatural • Formal support may be very difficult • Duration membership specific

8.6. Brokering Through "Socially Committed" Other Person

Strengths:	Weaknesses:
• Recruitment straight forward after "specially committed" • Excellent model for informal orientation other person gets involved • Growth in relationships likely • Independent of agency/system for support • Added other likely, duration length likely high	• Requires "specially committed" other person • Support informal by other person • Dependence for support on "specially committed" other person

8.7. Independent Service (e.g. Citizen Advocacy)

Strengths:	Weaknesses:
• Recruitment conscious purpose • Orientation implicit before introduction • Ongoing support and growth that's independent of system • Long duration highly possible • Added others highly possible	• Recruitment not natural • Potential focus within relationship to the exclusion of others • Potential dependence on one "found" friend • Duration can be linked to independent service survival

8.8. Stimulate Existing Networks of Friends and Family

Strengths:	Weaknesses:
• Recruitment already done • Value in relationship	• Orientation very hard (e.g. powerful histories)

END