

Indirect Services and Referral System for Community Mental Health Centers: Implementation and Methods of Measurement

Jean Tippet, Ph.D.*
Rosita Owens, M.A.
Francine Frome, B.A.

ABSTRACT: *The role of indirect services and a client referral system in community mental health is explored and a method of implementing, tracking, and evaluating them within a center is presented. The method can be used with or without computer support and includes a Resource Index and an optical coincidence card sort file for fast and appropriate client referrals and an Indirect Service Form for recording community-oriented services, staff training activities, and other staff functions not directly related to client care. Use of the system by a facility considerably expands its service potential by placing at its immediate disposal a large number of service resources, thus providing an extensive network of comprehensive care within the catchment area.*

Indirect services and a comprehensive client referral system are both basic to the functioning of a community mental health center. In this paper we would like to explore briefly the role of these two activities in community mental health and then to present a method of tracking, evaluating, and supporting them within a center.

Indirect services refer to those activities not directly related to client care and include community consultation and education, staff training and development, program evaluation and research, and general administration, with consultation and education being one of the five essential services required for funding of a community mental health center. The importance of community consultation and education in a center derives from the related concepts of catchment area and primary prevention. The *Community Mental Health Center Program Operating Handbook* (National Institute of Mental Health, 1971, p. 2-4) states that,

* Dr. Tippet (Area A Community Mental Health Center, 3246 P. Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20007) and Mrs. Owens are on the staff of program evaluation units at community mental health centers in the District of Columbia. Ms. Frome was a student at the University of Maryland during the time she worked on this project as part of her Honor's Thesis. The authors wish to express their appreciation to Mr. Robert Kaufel, Mrs. Bernice Proctor, and other staff of the Multistate Information System, Research Center, Rockland State Hospital, Orangeburg, New York, for a very constructive working relationship and to acknowledge the considerable contribution on their part that was necessary for finalization and computerization of the Resource Index and Indirect Service System. They would also like to extend appreciation to the participants in the Multistate Information System Community Mental Health Centers Users Committee for their contribution to the final version of the forms. The work on the Resource Index was supported, in part, by Grant No. 1 R01 MH20851-01 MHS, National Institute of Mental Health, U.S. Public Health Service.