

# Working with Non-Legal Professionals as Part of the Legal Services Team

## *Social Workers at The Legal Aid Society*

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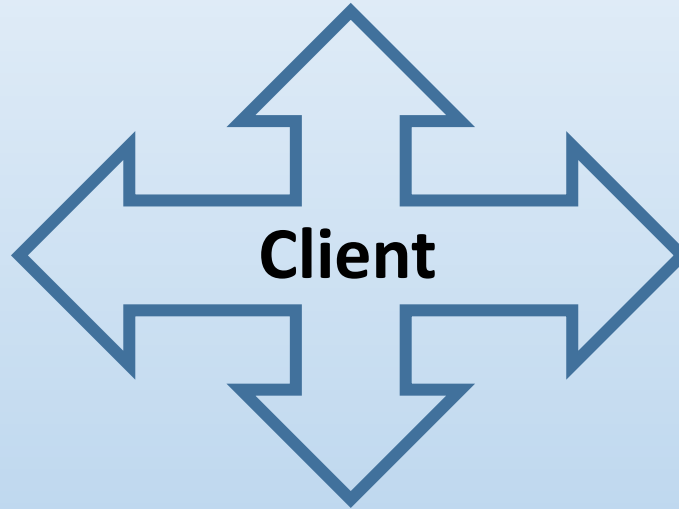


# Attorney

- Provide direct legal representation
- Engage in social services advocacy
- Work with *pro bono* attorneys

# Paralegal Casehandler

- Provide advice and brief services to clients
- Under supervision of an attorney, provide client representation in administrative proceedings
- Conduct factual and legal research



**Client**

# Social Worker

- Perform Initial Needs Assessment
- Perform crisis intervention
- Provide social services assistance advocacy
- Provide service referrals and follow-up
- Develop mitigation strategies

# Investigator

- Performing investigative research
- Testifying as a witness on matters

# Social Workers

## Forensic Social Worker (FSW)

- Forensic social work is the application of social work training to questions/issues relating to law/legal systems.
- FSWs hold advanced master level degree (MSW)
- Many are licensed professionals (LSW, LCSW) where they receive ongoing specialized training

# Social Workers

## Clinical Social Worker

- Clinical social work is a specialty practice area of social work which focuses on the assessment, diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of mental illness, emotional and other behavioral disturbances.
- Individual, group and family therapy are common treatment modalities

# Social Workers

## Case Worker

- Case Worker social work is commonly employed by social welfare agencies to help people obtain basic needs like food assistance, mental health care, medical care, and housing assistance

# What Social Workers Do As Part of an Interdisciplinary Team

- Collaboration with all legal team members
- Consistent client engagement
- Mental Health Diagnosis and Assessment
- Comprehensive Bio-Psycho-Social Reports

# What Social Workers Do As Part of an Interdisciplinary Team (cont.)

- Investigation and Assessment of Mitigation Themes and Advocacy
- Family Communication and Engagement
- Treatment Recommendations
- Re-entry Planning

# Why Should We Include Social Workers on the Team

- Enhances Legal Representation
- Ability to Assess More In-Depth Mitigation
- Deeper Understanding of Factors Impacting Clients



# Why Should We Include Social Workers on the Team (cont.)

- Expert Refinement of Client Narrative
- Client Benefits
- Validity and Assurance to the Court

# Role of the Social Worker on This Integrated Team

- Obtain and review records
- Identify assistance to best address needs
- Develop a record for purposes of showing willingness to utilize services, as well as compliance

# Role of the Social Worker on This Integrated Team (cont.)

- Develop an effective client narrative – tell the client’s story – individualize and contextualize
- Obtain letters of support, develop mitigation reports

# Social Workers at The Legal Aid Society

125 social worker staff

2 assistant social worker supervisors

12 social worker supervisors

2 Directors of Social Work

Total: 141 social worker professionals



# Ethical Considerations

## *Mandatory Reporters vs. Agent of the Team and Client Confidentiality*

- Social workers as an integrated member of the team are covered under the lawyer's confidentiality obligations to the client
- All client information is shared between the lawyer and social worker
- Social workers in this context are not considered "mandated reporters"

*“Service to others is the rent you pay for your room here on earth.”*

*Shirley Chisholm*



*“Alone we can do so little; together  
we can do so much.”*

*Helen Keller*

