

Effective Referrals

There will be times when you or your service cannot provide all the support your client needs to reach their goals. At this point you will need to refer the client to one or more organisations for support.

What is a referral?

Referrals can be broken down into two types:

- **A warm referral** – When the worker discusses the services the other organisation provides with the client, gains client consent to contact the other organisation and makes an appointment for the client. The worker may also take the client to the first appointment.
- **A cold referral** – When the worker provides the contact details and some basic information about the other organisations to the client. The client then makes an appointment with the organisation when they are ready.

Whether you make a cold or warm referral will depend on the needs of the client and the policy of your organisation. A benefit of a warm referral is that there is a higher chance of the client attending the appointment. A benefit of a cold referral is that the client is able to make the appointment at a time that suits them and they are increasing their independence.

A few issues to consider when making referrals to clients

- Are there any barriers to the client accessing the services of another organisation? Such as social anxiety, lack of confidence or motivation, transport issues, cost or cultural inappropriateness.
- When making a warm referral the client needs to have provided consent to access the organisation on their behalf, this is usually done in writing.

- Are there issues or risks that you need to address immediately? Such as risk of harm to the client or others.

How do you find the right services?

Workers can find it difficult to know where to access information on the services available in their area. Networking is important however it does not provide workers with comprehensive knowledge of their local services which is what leads to effective referrals for clients.

1. Online databases

There are several databases which can help. Remember to also check that your organisation's data is correct in the data base so others can refer to you.

- [HSNet Service Directory](#) is a NSW government funded online directory of human and justice services across NSW. The directory provides service information across a variety of sectors including health, welfare, community services, education, disability, aged care, legal and housing.
- [My Aged Care](#) assists older people, their families and carers to access aged care information and service via the [My Aged Care website](#) and national phone line (1800 200 422).
- The four local councils have online community directories that list a variety of services available in their local government area ([Wollongong Council](#), [Shellharbour Council](#), [Shoalhaven Council](#), [Kiama Council](#)).

2. Telephone Referral/Information Services

If you prefer to speak directly to someone about your client's needs you can call a telephone referral service. These services are professionally staffed and can provide tailored information on the most appropriate service for your client. Remember you will need to have consent from you client to discuss their personal information.

In an emergency call **000**

Link2home 1800 152 152. For information, assessment or referral to homelessness services and support in NSW, Link2home is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

NSW Mental Health Line 1800 011 511. Puts you in touch with your local mental health service. Staffed by mental health professionals, the line gives NSW resident's access to expert mental health advice, support and referrals for people dealing with a mental health problem and their families and carers.

My Aged Care 1800 200 422. Assists older people, their families and carers to access aged care information and services.

Alcohol Drug Info Service 1800 422 599. Support, information, counselling and referral to services in NSW.

Domestic Violence Line 1800 656 463. The Domestic Violence Line provides telephone counselling, information and referrals for women and same-sex partners who are experiencing or have experienced domestic violence.

Illawarra Family Referral Service 1800 663 863. Provides information and referral to a range of local support services for families, children and young people.

Men's Referral Service 1300 766 491. Provides information and referral to men with family issues and the people who support them.

[Click here](#) for more telephone information services.

3. Interagency meetings

Interagency meetings provide an opportunity for workers to meet and share information about their programs and organisations. There are over 20 interagency meetings in the Illawarra and Shoalhaven. [Click here](#) for a full list.

4. Agency visits to local services

As a worker you will find that there are organisations that you refer to regularly. Consider visiting these services and introducing yourself to the staff at those organisations. This can assist you to gain a better understanding of their referral and assessment process and the support your client will receive when they are referred.



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