



Flex Assessment Cover Sheet

Student Section *

Student Details:

Name: Jennifer Neza Vira
Student ID: S0116339
Location **: Australia - BUNDABERG - 4670

Assessment Type:

Course: SOWK 19017
Soc Wrk Theory & Prac IIIB
2008 Term Two
Assessment Nbr & Title: 2 - Practice in Organisations
Due Date: 12-SEP-2008
Weighting: 50%
Lecturer/Tutor: A. Hart
Tute Group: _____
Assignment Word Count: 2237 words.

Student Remarks:

Extension Information:

Extension granted No Yes++
Revised due date: 22.9.08
Extension approved by: A. Hart
Approval date: 11.9.08

DECLARATION

I certify that this assignment is my own work, based on my own personal study and/or research, and that I have acknowledged all material and source used in the preparation of this assignment/report whether they be books, articles, reports, lecture notes, any other kind of document, electronic or personal communication.

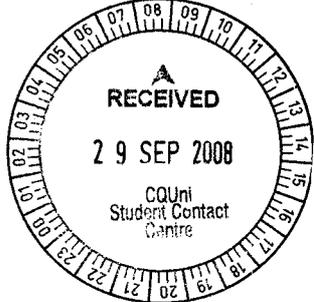
I also certify that this assignment has not been previously submitted for assessment in any other course or at any other time in this course, unless by negotiation, and that I have not copied in part or whole or otherwise plagiarised the work of other students and/or persons. I have read the CQU policy on plagiarism and understand its implications.

Signed: Nina
Date: 19.9.08

NOTE: This assignment will not be marked unless the student signs the above declaration!

Administration Section

Receipt timestamp



Marker Section

Mark/Grade: DISTinction.
Marker's Initial: TSR
Marker's Comments: An excellent paper. You provide some good practical analysis of the organisation using the literature. There are some very good examples of what, how and why social workers can do on the face of a government system. great work. Continue on back of page if required.

* To be completed by Student

** If this is not your current location, please include your mailing address details in the Student Remarks section

++ Complete details if Yes is selected

School of Sciences, Engineering and Health
Faculty Sciences, Engineer & Hlth
Flexible Learning

SOWK 19017



Jennie Vira

S0116339

Assessment Item 2 – Analysing professional social work practice within an
organisational context

SOWK 19017

Social Work Theory & Practice IIIB

Generic Stream

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this essay is to examine the actual and potential roles of social workers in working within, and promoting change within CRS Australia. Being that there are more than 175 CRS Australia offices around Australia, while also giving an overview, this essay will focus on the Bundaberg office of CRS Australia. The challenges for social workers promoting change within CRS Australia will also be discussed, along with those change management strategies that may be helpful. Examples drawn directly from experiences of student placement within CRS Australia will be scattered throughout this paper.

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CRS AUSTRALIA and BUREAUCRACY

CRS Australia, Bundaberg office is one of more than 175 CRS Australia offices across the country. All offices run under the same policies and procedures, with the aim that a job seeker who visits an office in Bundaberg, will be getting the same service as a job seeker assigned to an office somewhere in Western Australia or Victoria for example. Looking at an organisational chart, and with an understanding of how CRS Australia works, it can be identified that this agency is a bureaucracy. Robbins and Barnwell (2002) state "Bureaucracies have a well-deserved reputation for being slow to change... This is because bureaucracies reward stability and adherence to the rules... Change requires modification to the rules and regulations, which can often only be made after extensive consultations and committee meetings" (p. 312). Change then to policy and procedure would be not only a lengthy process, but potentially also not something that may come about from an individual worker in one of the offices. CRS Australia is a government agency, and policy and procedure is generally brought about following consultation at a head office level, and then filtered down through all locations. Changes in Government can also offer potential for changes in policy.

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and May
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CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Kotter and Schlesinger (1979, cited in Coulshed & Mullender 2006), have identified six change management styles. These are education and communication, participation and involvement, facilitation and support, negotiation and agreement, manipulation and co-optation and explicit and implicit coercion. (p. 77-78). Within the discussion below about the CRS Australia Bundaberg office, and areas identified by the social work student on placement, the first three styles of change management appear to relate most closely to the situations.

SOCIAL WORK ROLE WITHIN CRS

Despite the fact that policy and procedure is universal and change, at initial view, would appear a lengthy and almost impossible prospect due to the bureaucratic nature of the organisation, there is room to move and be creative on a front line level. The CRS Australia program for Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) funded job seekers is program that runs for up to two years, with the end goal being employment for the job seeker. Whilst there are policies and procedures to assist the Rehabilitation Consultants (RC) along the way, there is flexibility with how the program is delivered. The requirement of each job seeker as per their activity agreements that they sign when they enter program is that they attend at CRS Australia each fortnight for an appointment with their Rehabilitation Consultant. This is a requirement not only because they have signed an activity agreement, but also required in order for them to continue to receive their Centrelink payment. If a job seeker does not attend an appointment with no valid reason, the RC is required to notify this through the computer system, which in turn notifies DEEWR, which in turn is also accessible by Centrelink and the individual could be breached, which means no payment, or reduced payment for a specified period of time. This is standard procedure regardless of which CRS Australia office an individual is referred to. However, how each program runs can vary from office to office.

Client-centred approaches, identified by Chenoweth and McAuliffe (2005), is part of the humanist existential approaches, which “strongly resonate with social work and human service values about the inherent dignity of humans and the commitment to equality and self-determination” (Chenoweth & McAuliffe 2005, p. 121). CRS Australia has a policy that encourages client involvement as much as possible during all stages of their program, which is consistent with AASW practice standard 1.3 which states: “The client is involved, as far as possible, in developing a service plan with the social worker and in its implementation, the strengths and capacities of the client being acknowledged and respected” (AASW 2003, p. 8). Within the Bundaberg CRS Australia office for example, job seekers are engaged as much as possible, with the aim that they attend each fortnightly appointment, or at least phone if they are unable to attend in order to avoid being reported on the system. Jones and May (1992) identify that the treatment of consumers is a part of street-level work. One of the RC's had identified that it would be preferable for job seekers to remain engaged, and having to report them for non attendance is not favourable. As a result, during all appointments that job seekers attend, there is constant reminder to ensure that if that at any time they can't attend an appointment then they should make a phone call. Job seekers are phoned prior to appointments to remind them to attend and letters are also sent out with their next appointment times listed. If a job seeker does not attend an appointment, the RC will make a phone call to follow up reasons for non attendance. The result has been that the Bundaberg office has not reported any non valid non attendance at all in 2008.

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good points
 This is an example of change of street level yes?

As already mentioned, the goal for job seekers on program with CRS Australia is a job. In Bundaberg, it was identified by a front line worker that many of the job seekers on program were at the job seeking stage. This means all other areas had been addressed, such as disability and pain management, accommodation issues, substance use issues, child care responsibilities etc. The requirement, as already mentioned, is for the job seeker to attend fortnightly appointments with their RC. For those at job seeking stage, a job club has commenced. This means attendance at the

CRS Australia Bundaberg office for their fortnightly appointment on a Monday morning, where job searching will take place. This includes such things as internet searches, looking through the newspapers and cold canvassing employers. Whilst here, the job seekers can make phone calls and use the computers to write and send cover letters and resumes. The RC's take it in turns each week to oversee job club, which means assisting with resume preparation, writing cover letters or answering selection criteria. Job club has assisted in these job seekers fulfilling their fortnightly appointment obligations and also in freeing up the RC's time to enable them more time to focus on those job seekers who are not at job seeking stage.

This seems another strategy that is congruent with social work - yes?

In the Bundaberg office of CRS Australia, there are two occupational therapists, two psychologists and two exercise physiologists. No access to a social worker has made it difficult to pinpoint actual and potential roles of social workers within the Bundaberg office. However, the Gladstone and Rockhampton offices of CRS Australia have one social worker in each, and time has been spent in the Gladstone office observing and discussing the role of social workers. Regardless of the discipline each employee comes from, they are classified first and foremost as an RC, with specific disciplines being able to conduct specific sessions, such as the occupational therapists conducting functional capacity evaluations, or the psychologists conducting IQ and personality assessments. In the Gladstone office, the social worker conducts vocational assessments. In the Rockhampton office, the social worker identified a need for job search specific skills such as interview preparation and presentation and resume and cover letter writing. As a result, a group program was offered to those job seekers identified as in need of this intervention. This program was identified as a need during this particular social workers' fourth year student placement at CRS Australia Rockhampton, and continues to run five years later.

A home very good example

As mentioned above, employees of CRS Australia are referred to as Rehabilitation Consultants, regardless of the discipline they come from. This in itself could lead to a loss of identification with their individual disciplines. As a social worker within CRS Australia, whilst following organisational specific

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job descriptions, policies and procedures is a job requirement, it is also necessary to acknowledge not only the practice standards and code of ethics of the Australian Association of Social Workers, but also those values and principles held by the social work profession. As such, a role identified for social workers at CRS Australia is that of education provided to other disciplines as to what social work is all about and what social workers can do. It would be necessary for a social worker employed by CRS Australia, that they do not lose their own identity. This ties in with the AASW practice standard 1.8 which states: "Within the multi disciplinary team, the social worker maintains social work principles, values and practice whilst acknowledging the practice base of other disciplines" (AASW 2003, p. 10). Education and communication and participation and involvement are the two change management styles identified here.

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"The decisions of front-line workers can thus be of great importance in determining the level and pattern of use of organisational resources" (Jones & May 1992, p. 276). At CRS Australia for example, whilst job seekers are on programme, the RC's have a certain amount of discretion as to what funds can be spent on certain things for the job seeker. This can include such things as training courses, clothing and shoes for employment or interviews, physiotherapy, licences or petrol. There was recently a case where a job seeker was doing a computer training course, and requested that a copy of Microsoft Office be purchased for him if possible as he wanted to continue his practice of the software at home. Whilst the RC had discretion to be able to release the \$125 required for him to purchase this software, the decision was made by them not to do so. Should this particular job seeker have had a different RC assigned as his case manager, he may have received this software.

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As a social work student on placement at CRS Australia Bundaberg office, where there are no other social workers, a gap has been identified with regards to the service provided to job seekers. Whilst it is accepted that a role of an RC is referral to other agencies if the need is there, in reality, in the Bundaberg office, this is not happening as much as it could be. Referrals for

things such as physiotherapy, hearing tests, or podiatry happens regularly and all RC's are aware of the services available in Bundaberg. However, other issues such as alcohol and other drugs, homelessness, relationship concerns or financial counselling generally gets overlooked or simply brushed over by the RC's as there isn't that awareness of the availability of those services in Bundaberg. This is where the role of a social worker would fit well in the Bundaberg office and fits in well with the Australian Association of Social Workers practice standard 1.1 which states: "The social worker has the necessary knowledge, skills and resources to bring to the client situation" (AASW 2003, p. 8), and standard 1.10 which states: "When necessary, the social worker recognises the need for, and arranges a referral to, a relevant service provider and/or for termination of the social work service" (AASW 2003, p. 11). Comments have been made by the RC's of the extensive knowledge of community agencies held by the social work student, and of the ability in general of social workers to network and identify relevant agencies within the community. As a result, this has been identified as an area that could be improved, so through internal email, team meetings and discussion in order that all RC's increase their knowledge of services available in the community that could benefit their job seekers. The change management styles of education and communication closely relates to the above example.

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CONCLUSION

In conclusion, whilst the idea of change within CRS Australia at first glance seems something that would not happen easily nor readily, the above has provided some examples of how a front line worker employed within the Bundaberg office can facilitate change and encourage different ways of direct service provision to their job seekers without necessitating a change of policy and procedure across the entire organisation.

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