

# MINIMUM STANDARDS ON SHELTERS FOR ABUSED WOMEN

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Victim Empowerment Programme is very high on the agenda of the national Crime Prevention Strategy. Welfare is the lead department. One of our main roles as the lead department is to address issues of **co-ordination** and **integration** of services.

The Victim Empowerment Programme is very broad, and there are a number of sub programmes within the main programme. The implementation of the Domestic Violence Act (lead department: Justice) puts the following demands on the Department of Social Development: - to facilitate and fast track the provision of shelters for abused women, as well as ensuring the availability and accessibility of counselling services to women and children.

Violence against women and children effectively erodes the strides that the department has made at policy level in an attempt to strengthen the partnerships with regard to the re-engineering of the criminal justice system. The eradication of all forms of abuse and violence against women and children is posing a critical challenge to the Department of Social Development. Intervention strategies should be based on a partnership approach between service providers and all departments that form part of the criminal justice system. With a new focus on development and empowerment of women, the new developmental paradigm (survivor support programme) encourages women to take active part in shaping their future as survivors of abuse and violence.

## 2. PURPOSE OF THE DOCUMENT

Shelters represent an absolutely critical point of crisis intervention. They serve as a “home”, a safe space when women and children are extremely vulnerable. They are therefore a crucial base of information on the extent to which the legal system is effective in protecting the enormous amount of women seeking such protection. It is for that reason that the Department has to set minimum standards for the operation and management of levels of shelters for abused, battered, and destitute women. Such minimum standards will ensure quality assurance in service delivery.

### **3. PARADIGM SHIFT WITHIN SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES**

The Financing Policy is advocating major shifts in terms of the way things have been done in the past. It creates an environment in which a developmental approach in service delivery could be a reality, whilst ensuring that transformation issues are constantly addressed with regard to the protection of women.

### **4. PRINCIPLES FOR DEVELOPMENTAL SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES IN RELATION TO SHELTERS**

The principles in the White Paper for Social Welfare, together with the following principles, provide for the foundation upon which transformation is to take place. Every shelter should as far as possible reflect all the principles (unless irrelevant) within their service delivery.

#### **4.1 ACCOUNTABILITY**

Everyone who intervenes with children youth, families, women and older persons should be held accountable for the delivery of an appropriate and quality service.

#### **4.2 EMPOWERMENT**

The resourcefulness of each child, youth, families, women and older persons should be promoted by providing opportunities to use and build their own capacity and support networks on their own choices and sense of responsibility.

#### **4.3 PARTICIPATION**

Children, youth, families, women and older persons should be actively involved in all the stages of the intervention process.

#### **4.4 FAMILY-CENTRED**

Services should be contextualised within the family, the extended family and the community. Support and capacity building to families should be provided through developmental assessment and programmes, which strengthen the family's development over time.

#### **4.5 COMMUNITY CENTRED**

Services should be contextualised within the community environment, and support as well as capacity building to communities should be provided through developmental assessment and programmes, which strengthen the family's development over time.

#### **4.6 CONTINUUM OF CARE AND DEVELOPMENT**

Children, youth, women, families and older persons should have access to a range of differentiated and integrated services on a continuum of care and development, ensuring access to a most empowering environment and programmes appropriate to their individual developmental and therapeutic needs.

#### **4.7 INTEGRATION**

Services to children, youth, families, women and older persons should be holistic, inter-sectoral and delivered by an appropriate multi-disciplinary team wherever possible.

#### **4.8 CONTINUITY OF CARE AND DEVELOPMENT**

The changing social environment, emotional, physical, cognitive and cultural needs of children, youth, families, women and older persons should be recognised and addressed throughout the intervention process. Links with continuing support networks and resources, when necessary, should be encouraged after disengagement from the system.

#### **4.9 NORMALISATION**

Children, youth, families, women and older persons should be exposed to normative challenges, activities and opportunities, which promote their participation and development.

#### **4.10 EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY**

Services to children, youth, families, women and older persons should be delivered in the most effective and efficient way as far as possible.

#### **4.11 PERSON CENTRED**

Positive developmental experiences, support and capacity building should be ensured through regular developmental assessment and programmes which strengthen the development of the child, youth, family, woman or the older person over a period of time.

#### **4.12 RIGHTS**

The rights of the children, youth, families, women and older persons as established in the South African Constitution and the various international conventions ratified by South Africa shall be protected.

#### **4.13 RESTORATIVE JUSTICE**

The approach to children, youth, families, women and older persons in trouble with the law should focus on restoring societal harmony and putting wrongs right rather than punishment. The person should be held accountable for his or her actions and where possible make amends to the victim.

#### **4.14 APPROPRIATENESS**

All services to children, youth, families, women and older persons should be the most appropriate for the individual, the family and the community.

#### **4.15 PERMANENCY PLANNING**

All services should prioritise the goal to have children, youth, families, women and older persons remain within the family and/ or community context wherever possible. When a young person, woman or older person is placed in alternative care, services should aim to retain and support communication and relationships between the person and the family (unless proven not to be in their best interests).

Every young person including women and children within the continuum of care and development should be provided with the opportunity to build and maintain lifetime relationships within a family and/ or community context within the shortest possible time.

#### **4.16 AFRICAN RENAISSANCE**

As South Africans and Africans, all services to children, youth, families, women and older persons should reflect an understanding of the African Context in which they are based and should consciously support the African Renaissance.

### **5. INTEGRATED POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR DEVELOPMENTAL SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES**

The Department advocates for a more holistic, integrated service rendering. The current policy provides the framework for such transformation of social welfare services. The framework has three levels of service delivery, with all levels functioning as a continuum (prevention and promotion, early intervention, continuum of care and development). The framework integrates special development areas such as poverty alleviation, HIV/AIDS, crime prevention, substance abuse, survivor support including development and disability within each level and across the focus groups of children, youth, families, women and older persons. No residential care facility should be restructured around or focus exclusively on any one of the special development areas. Shelters could however be structured around and provide services to one or more of the focus groups.

## **5.1 SERVICE LEVELS**

### **5.1.1 PREVENTION AND PROMOTION**

#### Awareness creation

- ?? Child abuse
- ?? Domestic violence
- ?? Life skills

### **5.1.2 EARLY INTERVENTION**

#### Programmes

- ?? Family integration and preservation programmes
- ?? Counselling service
- ?? Group work sessions
- ?? Play therapy for children who have been accommodated within the shelters.
- ?? Survivor to survivor support programmes
- ?? Neighbour helping neighbour programmes
- ?? Overnight care for victims of violence
- ?? Linkages and support to community structures
- ?? Regulations to be drafted for the effective management of shelters and the application of norms and minimum standards set

### **5.1.3 CONTINUUM OF CARE AND DEVELOPMENT**

- ?? Management of the shelter (short term and long term placements)
- ?? Shelter to be registered with the department of Social Development.
- ?? Programmes should be developmental in nature.
- ?? There has to be access to:
  - educational programmes for both children and adults
  - Health services
  - Social services
  - Legal services

### **5.1.4 FINANCING POLICY OPTIONS**

- ?? Use of existing facilities in the communities, including departmental institutions on a crises intervention level. Service purchasing and differentiated programmes could be considered.

## **6. MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR ALL LEVELS OF SHELTERS**

### **6.1 DEFINITION OF A SHELTER**

A shelter is a residential facility providing short-term intervention for women and children in crises. This intervention includes meeting basic needs as well

as providing support, counselling and skills development. Currently service delivery is mostly done at an early intervention level.

- 6.1.1 A shelter must be linked to an accredited organisation (in their community) and registered at the Department of Social Development.
- 6.1.2 All persons involved in providing sheltering must attend training, which meets the minimum standards.
- 6.1.3 The Department of Social Development will implement a developmental quality assurance (for monitoring and evaluation purposes) in an effort to ensure both effective service delivery and delivery in line with the transformation vision and goals of social welfare services.
- 6.1.4 There has to be an adequate screening process of clients in terms of assessment as soon as they arrive for admission. The assessment process will be with regards to; the type of problem experienced by the women including children, the social circumstances, an appropriate plan for intervention and appropriate disposition of the case thereafter, for example, divorce, reconciliation, or admission to a second stage shelter if available.

An effective process of referral needs to be in place, and a procedure manual in terms of how to deal with domestic violence cases. This includes injuries sustained if any, maintenance of children, and the collection of personal belongings. An admission process should be established for all levels of shelters, and this would ensure that all survivors who require help are admitted. A shelter should have a policy for discharge and re-admission of clients.

- 6.1.5 A standardised intake sheet to guide the assessments, placement and referrals.
- 6.1.6 A current list of shelters and contact persons should be maintained at all shelters, and police stations around the area.
- 6.1.7 The location of a shelter where the woman and her children are staying should not be disclosed.
- 6.1.8 The accommodation of women and children in the rooms shall take into account the practical issue of normalisation as far as possible as well as individualisation, participation and showing respect for respective cultures.
- 6.1.9 A shelter must make provision to accommodate children.
- 6.1.10 A shelter must be generic in its approach and should accommodate all types of victims, not only domestic violence cases. The destitute,

homeless women who may have been victims of any form of violence or abuse could also be admitted.

## **7. SAFETY/SECURITY**

Shelters at all levels (safe houses, crisis centres) must have the following:

- ?? A telephone (land line and cellular phone)
- ?? Security bars on windows and doors including panic buttons.
- ?? Exterior walls with locked gates.
- ?? 24 hour supervision by either a volunteer, a member of the SAPS if not contracting the service to a security company.

## **8. RESPONSIBLE MANAGEMENT**

The approach on this issue may differ from shelter to shelter. However the basic requirement will be that every shelter needs to have;

- ?? A community management board. The board or committee must be reflective of the community being served, and where possible the target group that's being served.
- ?? Accountability and effective management/supervision of volunteer services. A supervision programme be put in place. (it is critical to address the whole issue of how they are being recruited and what training is in place for them).
- ?? Continued monitoring and evaluation (internal process)
- ?? A plan for staff development and capacity building, including capacity building programmes for board members.
- ?? Sound financial management systems.
- ?? Administrative support.

Should the shelter not be the property of the organisation, the owner of the house would have to;

- ?? Ensure that a lease agreement is signed for a specified period with regard to the occupation of the house.

## **9. PROGRAMME CONSIDERATION**

### **9.1 SAFE HOUSES**

- ?? Offering temporary accommodation – length of stay not more than a week (a warm reception and assessment of the nature of abuse should form the basis of a care model).
- ?? Counselling/support on admission – women to be offered options and information on available services (including legal services and maintenance issues).
- ?? Participation in house hold chores, e.g. cleaning, cooking etc.

- ?? Have an established programme for children for their stay. A bridging programme to be offered for those that cannot be taken back to the same school where the child attended.

The employment of child care workers be considered for the care of the children as parents become engaged in other activities/matters such as court attendance, time spend on skills training or spending time outside the shelter in an effort to seek employment.

## **9.2 CRISES CENTRES**

- ?? Counselling/support on admission – women to be offered options and information on available services (including legal services and maintenance issues.)
- ?? Participation in house hold chores, e.g. cleaning, cooking etc.
- ?? Have an established programme for children for their stay. The child be enrolled to a school nearby, and the matter be brought to the attention of the Principal in terms of school fees payment. In situations where safety is a problem, the child could be involved in a bridging programme.
- ?? Crisis centres would require access to professional health services.
- ?? Crisis centres would have a 24-hour access, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.
- ?? The shelter should be linked to local childcare services in an effort to provide a range of services to children, unless a similar service could be provided from the shelter itself.

## **10. SECOND STAGE HOUSING**

Second stage housing should reflect an independent living in preparation for the emancipation of the woman. Women living in such housing should be linked to community programmes e.g. economic empowerment programmes, skills development, capacity building, life skills (e.g. self-defence) literacy programmes, etc. If programmes are manned at the second stage housing, women that have been returned to their houses should also be linked to the programmes.

### **COMPILER**

**TASK TEAM ON SHELTERS – 21 FEBRUARY 2001**

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