

Steps for Adding Social Work Capacity: Identify Client Needs & Community Resources

Before hiring a social work staff member in your public defender office, it may be helpful to identify the needs your clients face and consider how you will use a new position to address them.

This worksheet guides you through a client needs assessment, including identifying existing resources in your community and noting additional resources that are not currently available. Then, it asks you to outline how you would use a social worker to address common needs. Doing this can help you clarify the intended role of your social work staff member and develop tasks for a job description.

Client Needs Assessment

Begin by identifying the various issues your clients face, other than the criminal matter that brings them to your office. Think about issues that contributed to their entry into the system and issues that may be consequences of their justice involvement. Clearly identifying needs is an important step toward effectively integrating a social worker into your office. Check all that apply.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Substance use <input type="checkbox"/> Other behavioral health issues <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of health care insurance <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of/revoked driver's license <input type="checkbox"/> Food insecurity <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of housing/housing insecurity <input type="checkbox"/> Un- or underemployment <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of education (e.g., lack of English fluency, literacy, high school degree) <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of soft employment skills (e.g., communication, interviewing) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of job readiness skills (e.g., certifications) <input type="checkbox"/> Immigration issues <input type="checkbox"/> Existing criminal record <input type="checkbox"/> Loss of child custody <input type="checkbox"/> Department of Social Services issues <input type="checkbox"/> Domestic violence <input type="checkbox"/> Physical disability <input type="checkbox"/> Child, elder, or dependent care responsibilities <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
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Existing Resources Available to Clients

Now, document resources that are available in your jurisdiction to assist your clients with the needs you identified above. Check all that apply.

<input type="checkbox"/> County social services	<input type="checkbox"/> Goodwill, Salvation Army, and/or similar non-profits
<input type="checkbox"/> County health department	<input type="checkbox"/> Local advocacy groups
<input type="checkbox"/> Faith-based organizations	<input type="checkbox"/> Substance use treatment facilities
<input type="checkbox"/> Halfway houses	<input type="checkbox"/> Mental health treatment facilities
<input type="checkbox"/> Housing shelters	<input type="checkbox"/> Job training/workforce development organizations
<input type="checkbox"/> Local community center	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Domestic violence shelters	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> County mobile crisis team	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Local management entity/managed care organization (LME/MCO)	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Local hospital and medical facilities	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Veterans Affairs facility	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____

Additional Needed Resources

In an ideal world, what additional resources would exist in your jurisdiction to assist your clients? Write your answer in the box below.

Using a Social Worker to Address Critical Needs

To help you prioritize tasks for social work staff, use the table below to list the three most common or important needs that your clients face. Then, think about how your office currently addresses those needs—if you are able to address them at all—and what your office could do differently if you had a social worker on staff. If you already have a social worker, think about what you could do differently if you had increased social work capacity.

Client Need	How Does Your Office Currently Address this Need?	How Could Your Office Use a Social Worker to Address this Need?
<p>EXAMPLE: Un- or underemployment</p>	<p>Attorneys tell clients about local job services center.</p>	<p>Form partnerships with and provide referrals to job training programs.</p> <p>Create a list of employers in the area that hire people with criminal histories.</p> <p>Help clients fill out applications for employment or job training.</p>