

Program Counselor

GENERAL SUMMARY

Primary function of the job is to provide information, assistance, advice, and guidance to individuals seeking public benefits and government services. Interviews and counsels clients, researches claims and conditions, determines accuracy of information and eligibility status, and provides referral services. Acts as an advocate or counselor for clients. Employees in this job have no formal supervisory role, however, may train, guide, prioritize, or lead case management assistants or other employees in the designated work unit. Employees work as part of a team and are responsible for ensuring that the team meets its objectives.

Employees must meet the minimum requirements, conditions of employment, and be able to successfully perform all essential duties and responsibilities with or without reasonable accommodations.

This position may require irregular hours. This position may also require travel by the employee in his/her own vehicle.

PRIMARY DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES (may include but are not limited to the following)

- Advises and counsels clients and provides information regarding services and benefits available to them and/or refers them to proper outside agencies when applicable and updates clients as changes occur, which may include coordinating the scheduling of appointments for applicable services.
- Receives, reviews, analyzes, and evaluates a variety of information associated with assigned programmatic area and makes recommendations based on findings.
- Checks and certifies each case to ensure all necessary documentation and criteria have been met.
- Assists clients and their families in filing their applications for services and benefits and acts as liaison between the client/family and outside agencies.
- Writes appeals for determinations made by federal, state, and local agencies.
- May act as an authorized agent or custodian of state and county emergency relief programs and may intervene when necessary to address emergent situations.
- May oversee the daily operation of departmental programs to include coordination of transportation.
- Participates in/on meetings, committees, and/or other related groups involving other agencies, service organizations, hospitals, and other community groups in order to receive and convey information.
- Serves as a liaison between assigned programmatic area and other internal departments, external agencies, and/or other interested parties.
- Corresponds with appropriate agencies to secure required documentation to properly submit necessary claims or obtain necessary services for clients from State and County agencies.
- Conducts field trips to assist clients who cannot come to the office to file for benefits and services.

Grand Traverse County, MI Job Description

- Prepares and facilitates training sessions and/or presentations to internal employees, groups, and/or other interested parties related to available programs in assigned area of responsibility.
- Maintains information, data, and statistics on operational activities and prepares related reports.
- Assists attorneys with all aspects of preparing victims for hearings and/or trials.

EDUCATION, FORMAL TRAINING, AND EXPERIENCE (minimum requirements)

- Associate's (two-year) degree in Counseling or a related field.
- Two to four years of related experience.
- A four-year college degree in a related field may substitute for up to one year of required experience. Two years directly related experience may substitute for each year of the education requirement, if there is demonstrated knowledge, ability, and skills to perform the work

CERTIFICATIONS, LICENSES

- Must have valid driver's license and personal vehicle insurance and maintain eligibility to drive as per the County's Vehicle policy.

CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT (minimum requirements - legal or contractual pre-employment obligations and/or requirements, such as drug testing, background check, etc.)

A background check may be required initially and periodically for an individual hired, transferred, reclassified, promoted, or currently working in this job. Appointment to or continued employment in this job is contingent upon a satisfactory background check which may include but is not limited to: confirmation of a persons' identity; review of criminal conviction records; verification of educational degree, license, or certificate required for the position; review of Department of Motor Vehicles records; Department of Justice fingerprint scan; and/or drug and alcohol testing as required and allowable by law. A satisfactory background check is defined as the absence of a criminal history record which bears a demonstrable relationship to the applicant's or employee's suitability to perform the required duties and responsibilities of the position.

May be required to serve in an "on-call" capacity.

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS

Work performed involves the exercise of considerable discretion and independent decisions based on professional knowledge, with a manager available for consultation in difficult situations. Regular communications with the general public and the handling of difficult people is expected. Errors at this level could cause serious, long-term consequences involving substantial financial costs, significantly reduced service to the public, and/or negative media reaction. These errors affect others outside of a department and may require the intervention of an agency head to resolve. Compared to Friend of the Court Case Managers, this job does not involve conducting investigations, mediating between parties, and is not responsible for enforcing court orders.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS, WORK ENVIRONMENT, AND OTHER REQUIREMENTS

- Work is primarily performed in an office or indoor environment
- May be required to reach with hands and arms; sit; stand; talk and hear; use hands to finger, handle, or feel
- May be required to lift/move up to 50 pounds (such as a box of paper)

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, ABILITIES, COMPETENCIES (minimum requirements)

- Proficiency in English grammar, spelling, punctuation, and simple mathematical functions such as addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, percentages, ratios, etc.
- Interpersonal skills necessary to develop and maintain effective and appropriate working relationships with customers, co-workers, and representatives of other agencies.
- Knowledge of laws, rules, regulations, procedures, and terminology applicable to the assigned subject area or program (victims' rights, veterans' services, etc.)
- Knowledge of community resources relevant to assigned program or subject area
- Knowledge and ability to use a personal computer to prepare reports, maintain records, search for and compile data
- Skill in operation of modern office equipment such as personal computer, facsimile, copiers, scanners, and telephones
- Skill in researching and resolving problems to ensure compliance
- Skill in assessing clients' needs and in assisting clients to seek solutions to problems
- Ability to effectively manage a high volume of cases Ability to handle multiple tasks simultaneously with frequent interruptions
- Ability to assess and provide guidance within area of specialized knowledge
- Ability to interpret and explain policies, processes, regulations, and applicable laws within area of expertise in layman's terms
- Ability to consistently demonstrate sound ethics and judgment
- Ability to display tact, emotional stability and patience while dealing with distressed individuals and to make immediate decisions in difficult and/or emergency situations
- Ability to think analytically and apply sound judgment, solve problems, make effective decisions, and act with integrity

Grand Traverse County, MI Job Description

- Ability to facilitate meetings effectively and efficiently
- Ability to effectively assess and guide both individuals and their families in their area of expertise
- Ability to comprehend, process and apply both verbal and written skills appropriate to the job
- Ability to accurately organize and maintain paper documents and electronic files
- Ability to maintain the confidentiality of information and professional boundaries
- Ability to use County resources effectively and efficiently