

APPENDIX D – PROCESS RECORDING WITH A COMMUNITY/AGENCY REPRESENTATIVE

Background Information

Ms. Jordan, age 30, is recently separated, eight months pregnant and has an 8 year old son. The client requested help because she felt depressed and immobilized since her husband left her six months ago. She needed help in obtaining financial resources and needed medical care.

Pre-engagement

Ms. Jordan came in unexpectedly to the Agency. I was free and saw her immediately. She was very upset and understandably frantic because she had not received her public assistance check yesterday and had a little food but no money left. She also received a notice from her utility company that her electricity would be disconnected for non-payment. I explored the situation and obtained the needed information. I asked Ms. Jordan to sit in the waiting room, and I would try to contact her worker to see what could be done about the undelivered check and to try to obtain extra money for back payment of her utility bill.

Narrative

I called the Social Service worker, Mr. Burke, and introduced myself. I said that I was calling on behalf of Ms. Jordan. Mr. Burke said that he knows her and had heard about the check not arriving. He said she is a big “manipulator” and has a record of misspending money. I was taken back by his negative description of the client. I simply said, “I see, but can you issue her a check now, since she has no money and seems very worried?” He said, “let her come in tomorrow and I’ll see what I can do, but I’m not getting her money for her light bill. She just has to learn how to manage.” We began to disagree, really argue, and I felt myself losing my cool. I then raised my voice in anger and frustration and said, “How can you do this? —What’s the matter with your Agency— don’t you see what’s happening to this women?” Mr. Burke became very abrupt and told me that he would look into the matter. I felt he was just trying to get rid of me, so I ended the call and said I would call him tomorrow to see if Ms. Jordan had come in for a replacement check or emergency money. I said that I still needed his help with the utility bill and he said he doubted he would change his mind.

I spoke with Ms. Jordan and told her what to do and that I would be in touch with her tomorrow afternoon. Later in the day, my supervisor told me the Director of our Agency received a call of complaint about my “outburst” from the Social Service Agency supervisor, and he was upset because he had worked hard to maintain a good relationship with that office.

Impressions/Reflections

I did not think through this phone call so I had no strategy in presenting Ms. Jordan’s situation or tuning in to how the worker might react. I was angry and frustrated and may have made things worse by losing my cool. I do feel good that my client knew I was trying to advocate for her.

Plan

I see this as a financial crisis. I plan to follow up tomorrow with the client and worker.

Questions/Issues

Help! I was so triggered. I need help in preparing the client for her meeting with the worker and for strategizing my approach with the worker tomorrow.