

2.1 Best Practice Guidelines for Making Referrals

This section offers best practices for making referrals. While it is intended for use by VAW designated services, we are hopeful that any service provider who encounters an abused woman will also follow these practices.

A referral is not a matter of diverting or sending a client from one service provider to another, or providing her with a list of agencies and telephone numbers. For the purposes of these Best Practice Guidelines, a referral is *the transfer of trust from an employee with one service provider to another employee with another service provider*. Accordingly, the Guidelines use the word 'connect' to reflect this transfer of trust.

One of the cornerstones of providing good customer service to abused women is the systematic and consistent connecting of any woman requesting VAW services with an appropriate service provider. The goal is to make this connection within 48 hours of the request.

Referring to another agency: When connecting a woman to another agency, the agency making the referral will:

- Whenever possible, encourage the client to make a telephone contact with the receiving agency in the presence of the worker. An appointment can then be made between the client and the receiving agency.
- Ensure that the client has all the names and directions that she requires.
- If the client declines an immediate referral to the receiving agency, but agrees to consider it for the future, the referring agency will provide the client with the names and numbers of workers of both the referring and receiving agencies and encourage her to call one of them if and when she is ready.
- If you are referring the client to an agency you haven't worked with before, speak to the agency worker first to explain why you are making the referral and establish whether the receiving agency is willing and able to provide the client with the services requested.

Receiving a referral from another agency: When receiving a referral from another agency, the receiving agency will:

- Make every attempt to take the phone call right away.
- Reassure the client that you would be happy to see her at her earliest convenience, and attempt to book an appointment right away.
- Obtain **consent** for the referring agency to send her case information so that she will not have to repeat her story and information again. Whenever possible, avoid having the client repeat her story by referring to available information in the file.
- Explain the range of services you can provide to her and within what timeframe.
- Assure the client that, if needed she may receive several appointments with your agency and she may be connected to other needed services including group support services.