Recommendations for Barrier Busters Financial Request Verification and Documentation

A brief evaluation of 12 Barrier Buster agencies' case files was conducted at the end of May 2006, according to the criteria below, for funds distributed via the Emergency Services contract with the Department of Human Services for Homeless Prevention and Homeless Transition. Following this evaluation, the following problems with, and recommendations for, agency case files were identified.

Criteria:

- *Certification of eligibility showing the source, amount and timing of all matching contributions.*
- *Date of contact with the client.*
- *Problem identification.*
- *Methods of service delivery.*
- *Significant contacts with client and significant events.*

Problems:

1. *Incomplete case files*. Files were often missing pertinent information including documentation of with whom and how things like income, amount owed, and future financial plans had been verified. Also, in many instances, Barrier Buster Release of Information forms were not present.
2. *Documentation/verification was erratic*. For some agencies, the breadth and depth of documentation/verification was vastly different from file to file.
3. *Exhaustion of other resources not documented*. Many agencies, though the check off list for other resources used in Encompass was filled out, did not document why other resources had not been utilized. Also, in some instances, denials of SER were not documented (neither the denial form nor a case note documenting verbal confirmation with DHS was present in the files).

Recommendations:

1. *Keep complete and accessible records*. For example, if your agency has an electronic case file system, you do not necessarily need to print out your case notes and Encompass forms to store in a folder. However, the information must be complete and easily retrieved in the case of a review or audit.

2. *Document everything***.** While the purpose of this fund is to meet emergent needs, it is critical to verify and document all attempted and obtained financial contributions from other sources WHEN applicable**.** If the need precludes the involvement of outside resources, this must be documented.

3. *When working with other agencies*, make sure that the agency making the BB request has the necessary documentation to back up the request. (e.g. If you're working with Salvation Army to help a client, and they have all the

documentation but you submit the request, your agency must also have this documentation to support the request.)

4. *Be as consistent as possible.* If it helps your agency's Barrier Buster, develop a checklist and stick to it. Work these guidelines in with existing procedures for case file documentation.

5. *Get a Barrier Buster release of information EVERY TIME!* In order to share information via Encompass and on the BB list serve, clients must give permission. You CAN get a verbal consent, but it needs to be witnessed by two people (e.g. one staff person reads the form to the client while another staff person listens and, when the client consents, they both sign the form stating verbal consent was given).