

GETTING THEM TO SHOW UP FOR APPOINTMENTS

When I was a child we had a calendar in our kitchen and we all wrote down when we had something to do. My mother would write doctor's appointments and PTA meetings and any event that we had to attend, as a child that taught me the importance of writing down appointments and keeping them. Many of our clients have grown up with out ever learning these tools. This could be one of the reasons that our clients do not show up for their appointments.

Recently a co-worker of ours Case Manager Ginger Campbell from AARP in Eureka, CA passed on a tip to me about getting clients in to the office. Ginger goes around to businesses and gets calendars from them; she then uses them for clients.

When a client comes into the office ask the client if they have a calendar. Then give her or him a calendar and have them write down the appointment on the calendar. Ask them to put in on their refrigerator or in the kitchen where they can see it everyday. Get them use to every day. I believe that our biggest problems with clients are that we assume they know some the basics that we may have taken for granted that we learned as a child.

If you have any things that you do for clients to get them to appointments let me know and I will sent out the tip.

RESPONCES

Here we've purchased "mini" day planners (they run approximately \$1.00-\$2.00) and give those to the program participants with their appointment written down inside. They really seem to like the day planners and feel important that they now have one in their purse/pocket.

I do the calendar thing already but i also do something else it is a little more time consuming but in the end it is more efficient i tell my customers to call me the day before their appointment so if their appt. Is at 10 on Tuesday they are expected to call me and confirm Monday by the end of the day. If they have not then I call them Monday night and remind them. This way they have no "I forgot" excuses.

Here in Pittsburgh we have come across this issue again and again. With our new Job Retention and Advancement program we will be serving 300 customers a year for the next 4 years. To help introduce positive solutions to scheduling we have decided to give each client a date book upon enrollment. They were inexpensive (less than \$3 each) and they are the "undated" type- clients write in the dates- so that they won't be useless in the new year. We build this client support into our grant from the beginning. A little planning goes a long way!

One of our new workers had a new approach to setting up appointments. She calls her customers and says something like "Your renewal is due and I have these times/dates available for appointments, what would be a good time for you?" Not everyone has a phone but for those that do it works. The result has been more customers showing up for appointments. When you think about it we have tried to stress personal responsibility. As customers we set up our appointments at our convenience. It seems only respectful that we do the same for our social service customers.

In our county we give our cash clients a yearly calendar it is a leather bonded weekly planner it is real nice. I like the ideal of giving them a full size calendar to hang up in their house. I know from myself I still haven't programmed myself to put everything I need in my daily planner, but I will put it on a wall calendar. Some of the things we do here is when we make an appointment we make a follow up card which is different colors to mail out a few days before the appointment as a reminder, if they have a phone we put the phone number in the with the appointment time and give a call, that I do most of the time, since time is always being chased for dead lines. I try to educate the people about their case. I tell them it is your case and what happens is actually your responsibility. I just do the paper work and I can't do the paper work with out the paper. We give them a folder to keep all correspondence with us in so they can keep track of their case. I have always talked in terms of cash money that seems to get and keep their attention. I am lucky to be in a smaller county and we keep our people longer than the turn over in the larger counties.

I give a calendar. This is often misplaced (it's not a big one for the refrigerator.) I discuss a big one for the refrigerator, and if such a one is requested, I print the next couple of months off the Internet. Some clients say things like, Not too fancy, eh? Or YUCK. I offer to call clients to remind them of appointments. This is interesting. At some point, sometimes sooner and sometimes later, people become embarrassed, proud, etc. and say, you don't need to remind me of the next appointment; I'll remember. I always gratefully thank them. This works with most (not all) people; some people are so accustomed to not taking adult responsibility that they don't seem to get it. Then I have to get honest. Most people seem to take to the responsibility as if they'd always conducted business as such.