FAQ: Accompaniment & Follow-up

As per Principle 4, we will arrange accompaniment and follow-up services for clients as needed – whether this is provided by Salvation Army staff or other service providers in the community.

Accompaniment and follow-up supports will assist individuals to connect with the services and supports they need, find and retain housing (including eviction prevention), and improve both their integration into the community and their quality of life.

The following frequently asked questions (FAQ) have been assembled to address the benefits, expectations, and parameters around accompaniment and follow-up services.

### What does accompaniment mean?

Accompaniment is when a worker physically goes with a client to meet with a service provider, access a resource, and/or attend another type of appointment (e.g. rental unit viewing, doctor appointment, court appointment, help moving into housing, client advocacy).

Accompaniment should entail **warm transfers** and **planning alongside** clients (e.g. set up transportation, documents needed) in order to create relationships of trust with other service providers, foster autonomy and empower clients to access services or attend appointments on their own in the future.

### What is a “warm transfer”?

A warm transfer is a **face-to-face introduction** where the client is accompanied by one service provider whom they trust, and is introduced to a second service provider whom they don’t know.

### What are follow-up services?

Follow-up services are supports provided to clients after exiting the program to help them settle into a new home, identify local resources (e.g. library, food bank), make connections with other service providers in the area (e.g. primary care doctor, Alcoholics Anonymous or other support groups, legal clinic), and develop a safety net of supports (e.g. family, friends, sponsor, faith community, etc.).

Follow-up services offer an opportunity to check-in with clients and ensure their support needs continue to be met.

### What are some ways I can follow-up with a client?

Follow-up support can be offered via scheduled phone calls by a (TSA or external) worker and/or friendly visits to a client’s home or a different agreed-upon meeting place by another service provider set up by a TSA worker [see “warm transfer”]. These should be arranged in advance and with the client’s informed consent.

Section H of the Key Work Model provides an easy to use, question-based tool that can be used by staff when following up with clients.

### Who should receive accompaniment and/or follow-up services?

Individuals who have higher needs and who struggle to leave the shelter should be connected with accompaniment services, with their consent. All clients exiting the program should be offered follow-up supports, if desired.

All individuals should be made aware of these services upon entering the program. Clients’ need and desire for these services is to be identified during key work meetings.

### Who should provide accompaniment services or follow-up services within the shelter?

Accompaniment services should ideally be provided by an **outreach, resource, or peer worker**, whose job is to connect individuals to the services and resources they need. Follow-up services may be offered by a Key worker, Chaplain, trained volunteer or former resident. Both of these services may also be provided in partnership with an external provider.

It is important for staff providing these services to have established or developed a **sense of rapport and trust** with clients to ensure they feel safe and comfortable when receiving accompaniment and follow-up support services.

Any staff member or volunteer providing accompaniment services must have completed a Police Reference Check (also called Vulnerable Sector Screening) within the last 6 months prior to submission to the Executive Director.

### When should we arrange follow-up and accompaniment services?

Follow-up support and accompaniment needs should be identified and arranged during key work meetings, or upon request by clients.

A worker would ideally follow up with a client every 1, 3, 6, 9, and 12 months after organized departure. The worker and client should determine exact times and means of communication together prior to each follow-up [See FORM H of Key Work Model].

### My Ministry Unit is not funded to provide follow-up services, what should I do?

Try to establish a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with another local service provider where you can refer your clients for follow-up supports and services after they leave your shelter. Check with your funder or systems planner to find out if your region funds someone else to do this work and then establish the appropriate pathway for connecting your clients to that service/team.

Or, try to partner with your local corps or another faith community that might be looking for integrated mission or meaningful volunteer opportunity.

Or, try share responsibility for brief follow-up calls across your staff group – even front line workers who cover the front desk have quiet times now and then, and could each have a list of people to call and check up on.

Finally, while it can be tricky to host regular community meals in an emergency shelter, look for special opportunities to invite former residents to a meal, event, or chapel service for the purposes of reconnecting with staff and friends.

### What should I do to protect the client and myself or staff members prior to offering accompaniment or follow-up services?

Staff must be trained in and adhere to policies and procedures that minimize the risks and liabilities associated with accompaniment and follow-up services for both client and staff, including those pertaining to working alone, engaging with clients off-site, operating a vehicle, and health and safety factors.

TSA workers offering/providing accompaniment or follow-up services must abide by confidentiality and consent guidelines and communicate these to the client (e.g. client may refuse service or terminate service at any point in time). If connecting a client to an external service provider and sharing personal information, the key worker or TSA staff must obtain informed consent from the client, who will fill out a Release of Information form.

Workers must arrange transportation that both they and the client feel comfortable with, utilizing critical judgment and assessing risk. If a worker decides to use a vehicle, they must first read and follow procedures outlined in the Accompaniment and Follow-Up Policy Sample. [See Sample Policy and Consent Form]

To ensure client and staff safety, both clients and staff engaging in accompaniment services should notify someone (e.g. key worker, supervisor) of their plans (where they are going, client name, time expected to return), and check-in prior to departure and upon safe return to shelter. Staff will contact supervisor immediately before entering and leaving a new or unfamiliar place. The staff will take steps to keep safe, which may include bringing another staff member or worker from another agency who is part of the client’s circle of care (that is, individuals that have filled out and received written consent from client to share information with relating to the client’s key work plan). If staff person (or client) does not check in as expected, the on-duty supervisor will contact the worker’s cell phone, home phone, and/or emergency contact, in that order respectively. If the team member has not been located using these methods, the supervisor calls the police to report the situation.

When accompanying or following up with clients in the community, staff must remain professional and behave according to the same standards of conduct as expected within the shelter. Staff will not take client to places not agreed upon beforehand and refrain from entering certain spaces (e.g. doctor’s offices), unless requested by client. Procedures must be put in place for client to report any incidents or safety concerns regarding interactions with staff members providing these services.

### What are the benefits of providing accompaniment and follow-up services?

Accompaniment and follow-up services remove barriers clients may face accessing resources and services (financial, systemic, disability-related, communication) and promote the continuity of supports, which are necessary to ensure housing stability and well-being for many individuals. These services may help mitigate issues such as loneliness, relapse, and eviction. For example, a follow-up support program started in 2011 at the Wiseman Centre resulted in a 67% reduction in long-term shelter stays, a 17% decrease in the total days of stay, and a drop in the recidivism rate from 30% to approximately 10%.

Not only do follow-up supports fall in line with Housing First, but are also now required by some government funders.