

REFERRING A PERSON FOR HELP

Cooperative Extension Service * University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign * Disaster Resource

1. Be aware of agencies and resources available in your community. Get to know the professionals and volunteers in your community who can help. Find out what services they offer and what their limitations are. Be sure to touch base with the following: Extension, social services, mental health, community action, food pantries (often church-sponsored), and support groups.
2. Listen for signs and symptoms that the person or family needs help that you can't provide (i.e., legal advice, financial advice, personal counseling). Remember, you are not a financial advisor or personal counselor, but you can link the person or family with resources that can help them deal better with their situations.
3. Assess what agency or community service resource would be most appropriate to address the person or family's problem. This is why it's important to know what community resources are available. If you have any questions about whether an organization could be of help, give them a call and ask.
4. Discuss the referral with the person or family. You might say, "I sense that you need help with _____. I think that [organization] can help you." It's even more useful if you can say, "I know of a family that went to [organization] and they found it to be very helpful." In short, if you know of families that have been helped, share their experiences but keep their names confidential.
5. Explore the individual or the family's willingness to contact the community resource. You might ask, "Does it make sense for you to contact [organization]?" or "How do you feel about seeking help from this agency?" If the person or family feels comfortable making the contact, urge them to do so.
6. If the person or family is unwilling to make the contact, or if there is some danger if action is not taken, you should take the initiative and do the following:
 - a. Call the agency and ask to speak with the intake worker (if there is one).
 - b. Identify yourself and your relationship with the person or family.
 - c. State what you think the person or family's needs are (depressed, suicidal, needs food or fuel, needs legal advice).
 - d. Ask the agency what follow-up action they will take and what (if anything) you can do.
7. Try to find out whether the person or family contacted the resource and whether they were helped. Don't pry for details — just make sure they know that you care and that you want them to get the help they need.

This information was developed by the Cooperative Extension Service of Kansas State University in Manhattan, Kansas. Some information is adapted from The Farmer in Distress: How the Veterinarian Can Help Out, by Roger T. Williams, University of Wisconsin at Madison. Reviewed by Aaron Ebata, Extension Specialist, University of Illinois. January 1995.

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For more information contact your local Extension office:



Disaster Resources Web site:
<http://www.ag.uiuc.edu/~disaster>