

## *How to Successfully Work with a Service Agency*

NOTE: The following guidelines for dealing with *Community Services* agencies were provided by a reader who works for an agency.

1. **Be patient and PERSISTENT.**
2. **Keep a notebook of contacts you make. A three-ring binder works great. Make a separate sheet for each service you try to locate:**
  - a. **List the name, telephone and address**
  - b. **Keep a record of each contact**
  - c. **Write down the date you called, the person you talked with and a short summary of what was said.**
  - d. **When you call back, ask for the same worker if he/she was helpful—otherwise ask for someone else, and refer to your notes.**
3. **Some of the questions to ask when you call an agency are: What services are offered? Who is eligible? What restrictions are there? What is the procedure for signing up? What is the fee and how will it be billed? Is there a waiting list? What information do you need? What is the next step?**
4. **Find out if there is someone in the agency, such as a Social worker (a person with a Master's degree in Social work), who could assist you with the application process and be assigned to your case.**
5. **If the agency requires an interview, be prepared:**
  - a. **Find out what documents will be needed - make a list of the papers you will need to take to the interview**
  - b. **Confirm the appointment a day in advance**
  - c. **Take notes during the interview. Clarify what is going to happen. Find out what are your responsibilities and what are the agency's responsibilities.**
6. **Never (almost) leave an original document. Make sure you take home all the documents you brought with you. If the interviewer wants to keep a document, ask them to make a copy for their records.**
7. **Keep all important papers together in a folder so that they can easily be located in the future.**

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*Meeting the Challenges* is published quarterly (four times a year) by the Partnership to Preserve Independent Living for Seniors and Persons with Disabilities, 6296 Rivercrest Drive, Suite K, Riverside, CA.

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