

## **B.Miles Assessment Procedure**

Applicants must be made aware of the fact that a referral is being made to B. Miles and that they are being assessed/reviewed to determine their needs for services. Applicants will be assessed on the following basis:

- The ability of B. Miles to meet the support needs of each woman;
- Applicants meeting the criteria;
- Compatibility with other tenants of the Scheme.

### **The assessment has 3 main aims - to:**

1. Ascertain the suitability of the applicant for B. Miles Women's Housing;
2. Gather information regarding the support needs of the applicant;
3. Provide information to the applicant about the B. Miles Women's Housing Scheme.

### **Interpreters**

When accepting referrals of women from non-English speaking backgrounds B. Miles will find out if interpreter services are required and arrange accordingly.

### **How to make a referral**

Contact the B. Miles Coordinator and provide initial information regarding the applicant. Telephone contact is sufficient at this stage. If the Coordinator is unavailable, another staff member will take some of the details and the Coordinator will then follow this up. The applicant, or someone acting on her behalf can make the initial contact. If there are vacancies at the time of referral and it appears that the applicant meets the criteria, the Coordinator will contact the applicant within 5 working days of the initial contact to arrange an assessment interview. If there are no vacancies at the time of initial contact, the applicant or the person acting on her behalf will be informed of the waiting list and how this operates.

### **If there are no vacancies when a referral is made**

1. The applicants file will be kept active and she (or the referring agency) will be asked to contact B.Miles every 2/3 weeks until a vacancy becomes available. Our decision to assess will depend on whether the vacancy is suitable to her needs.
2. If the applicant is requiring emergency accommodation, B.Miles will provide information about other housing options whenever possible.
3. When a suitable vacancy occurs the woman will be contacted for an assessment. There may be a greater number of applicants than available vacancies however. If it is unclear whether the woman wants to be contacted at a future date, her file will be placed 'on hold' for a period of 6 months.

### **Assessments**

If there are vacancies at the time of the referral, the assessment interview should occur within 10 working days of the initial contact and should be carried out by the Coordinator. Please note, applicants who are on the waiting lists will usually be given priority for assessment. The nature of the vacancy will determine which applicant is contacted for an assessment, that is, if the vacancy is in a shared property we will select applicants that appear to be well matched with the other tenant in the property. If the vacancy is in a single occupancy property we will assess applicants that specifically require this type of accommodation. Again, those women already on the waiting list will usually be given priority.

### **Where assessments are held**

Assessments are held at the B. Miles office. They can be held in other locations if there are legitimate reasons for doing so, e.g. the applicant is in hospital and transport to the office cannot be arranged; if the applicant is out of the area and her Case Manager cannot travel to B. Miles due to time restrictions.

### **Who attends the assessment interview**

The assessment is between the Coordinator, the applicant, and the primary case manager/clinician whenever possible. If no clinical supports are in place or the clinician is unavailable, it is required that the referring agency attend the assessment. If it is a self referral and there are no clinical supports, or the clinician cannot attend the interview, the applicant can attend on her own. She may bring a family member or friend for support should she wish to.

**Length of time needed for the assessment interview**

This varies considerably. The average time needed is 1 1/2 hours.

**Written information provided at assessment**

At the beginning of each assessment the applicant will be given a B.Miles pamphlet (if she does not already have one) and the B.Miles Tenants Rights and Responsibilities handout.

**Additional information required**

Confirmation of the applicant's diagnosis is required. The Coordinator may also request additional information relating to the applicants background, for example, history of violence; drug and/or alcohol use; ongoing clinical arrangements. If a woman attends an assessment without her clinical support present, the Coordinator will liaise with the clinical support provider to: confirm that the information in the assessment is correct; seek the clinicians assessment of the suitability of B.Miles for the applicant; to discuss any issues/concerns that may have arisen from the assessment etc.

**Procedure following assessment**

After the assessment, the matter is discussed at the next team meeting of B. Miles staff (currently on Wednesdays). The team considers: the information gained at assessment; vacancies; the applicants willingness to meet regularly with her housing support worker; the eligibility criteria; the applicants willingness to allow B.Miles staff to liaise with her clinical supports and compatibility with other tenants. It may be decided at the meeting to seek additional information.

**Assessment Decision**

Following the assessment and the next team meeting, the Coordinator informs the applicant, within 2 working days of the team meeting, of the decision. This decision will be either:

- acceptance in principle into the Scheme, depending on compatibility with other tenants or availability of a flat;
- what arrangements need to be made regarding meeting other tenant(s) in the Scheme;
- additional information required
- referral to another agency;
- refusal of service;
- placing the applicant on a waiting list.

**If the applicant is placed on a Waiting List**

- the applicant should be advised that she is on a waiting list for a vacancy, and be given information about the approximate waiting time (if known);
- information should be provided on alternative services, and a referral be made if appropriate;
- the applicant should know that her application will be reviewed every time there is a vacancy and that she can ask for a reassessment at any time if her circumstances change;
- the applicant should be aware of B. Miles complaints policy and procedures.

All applicants on the waiting list are to remain in contact with the Coordinator, informing B. Miles of any change of address or other circumstances. If a vacancy arises the Coordinator will decide which applicant is to be assessed. This decision will be based on the following: current housing situation; level of support required; type of accommodation available (i.e. single or shared) and the expressed preference of the applicants; perceived compatibility with the other tenant(s) - if applicable.

If considerable time has passed between the original assessment and the vacancy becoming available, the Coordinator will meet with the applicant to review her assessment.

**If service is refused**

- the applicant will be advised, giving reasons why she has not been accepted into the Scheme;
- if available, information will be provided about other services and if appropriate, a referral can be arranged;
- information will be provided on when, and under what circumstances, the applicant can reapply for B. Miles services;

- the applicant will be made aware of the complaints policy and procedures;
- the applicants file will be placed in the 'Inappropriate Referrals' file.

If there are no vacancies when a referral is made

1. The applicant's file will be kept active and she (or the referring agency) will be contacted to arrange an assessment when a vacancy becomes available. This will only be done if the applicant gives her permission and if it is appropriate to do so.
2. If the applicant is requiring emergency accommodation, B. Miles will provide information about other housing options whenever possible.
4. When a vacancy occurs the woman will be contacted for an assessment. There may be a greater number of applicants than available vacancies however. If it is unclear whether the woman wants to be contacted at a future date, her file will be placed 'on hold' for a period of 6 months.
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#### **Applicants Complaints Procedure**

- All unsuccessful applicants are given a verbal explanation as to why they have been refused tenancy.
- A written explanation will be provided, within 7 working days, upon request.
- If an applicant is not happy with a decision made by B. Miles she is encouraged, in the first instance, to discuss the matter with the Coordinator.
- If the applicant is not satisfied after talking with the Coordinator, she is to put her complaint in writing. B. Miles can assist her to do this, or she can obtain assistance from an advocate of her choice if necessary. The written complaint will be forwarded to the Chairperson of the Management Committee.
- The Chairperson will discuss the complaint with all parties. The investigation may involve a meeting with the complainant and their advocate. If required, an objective third party (acceptable to all involved) may be selected to convene this meeting.
- All individuals directly involved in the complaint have the right to an advocate of their choice.
- The Management Committee will assess the complaint and the material gathered from all the parties involved and make a final decision.
- The Chairperson will notify the applicant in writing within 7 working days of the decision made by the Management Committee.
- The applicant has the right at any point during this process to contact the Community Services Commission. Information on how to do this is provided when the applicant initially lodges her complaint.
- Information about how to lodge a complaint can be made available in appropriate languages.
- Delays may occur depending on the availability of translation services.
- Interpreters will be made available upon request.

#### **Meeting the other tenant (relevant only for our shared houses)**

After an applicant has been accepted into B.Miles, she must then meet the tenant who lives in the property which has the vacancy. Both the existing tenant and the applicant decide whether or not they will share a house together. The initial introductory meeting is held at our office. Both women will be accompanied by a support worker from B.Miles. Due to confidentiality issues, no one other than B.Miles staff can attend this meeting (interpreters excepted).

B.Miles staff ensure that a number of issues are covered in the meeting. For example: smoking; social activities; housework; alcohol; visitors likely to frequent the house etc. Each woman is able to add anything to the list for discussion. We encourage both women to be as open as possible and to raise any additional issues that are important to them. At the end of this meeting the support workers speak privately with each woman to find out if they want to share a house. If both women think that they might like to share a house, they are asked to arrange a second meeting. Staff do not attend the second meeting. The second meeting gives each woman a chance to get to know the other better and to make a more informed decision. Also, it

is less formal than the initial meeting. After the second meeting both women contact their respective support workers and inform them of their final decision. If either woman says no to living with the other, the applicant does not move into that particular house. She is then placed on a waiting list for the next appropriate vacancy. The introductory procedure is repeated when the next suitable vacancy arises.

**If applicant refuses service**

Every applicant has the right to refuse the service. Refusal will not prejudice her future access to the service. If an applicant refuses a particular property without providing valid reasons, B.Miles has the right to withdraw the offer of accommodation.