North Dakota Aging and Disability Resource-LINK
Policies and Procedures Manual

Service Chapter 650-50

North Dakota Department of Human Services
600 East Boulevard Dept. 325
Bismarck, ND 58505-0250

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North Dakota Aging and Disability Resource-LINK Policy and Procedures Manual 650-50

Purpose 650-50-01

(Revised 5/15/2012 ML #3328)

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To provide individuals with current information on opportunities and services available to older individuals, persons with disabilities, and caregivers within their community.

To maintain a statewide and nationwide toll-free phone service (1-855-462-5465) for the provision of services. Services are also provided through the use of e-mail (carechoice@nd.gov) and the Internet (www.carechoice@nd.gov).

Legal Reference and Authority 650-50-05

(Revised 5/15/2012 ML #3328)

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- Public Law 89-73, Older Americans Act of 1965, as amended in 2006
- North Dakota Century Code Chapter 50-06 (Department of Human Services)
- 45 Code of Federal Regulations Part 1321 (Grants for State and Community Programs)

Definitions 650-50-10

(Revised 5/15/2012 ML #3328)

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Definitions in this manual include descriptions of Older Americans Act programs and services that must be used in the completion of required Federal reporting. Please refer to Service Chapter 650-25 for a complete list of definitions.

"Disability" means a condition attributed to mental or physical impairment, or a combination of mental and physical impairments that results in substantial functional limitations in one or more of the following areas of major life activity: (1) self-care, (2) receptive and expressive language, (3) learning, (4) mobility, (5) self-direction, (6) capacity of independent living, (7) economic self-sufficiency, (8) cognitive functioning, and (9) emotional adjustment.

"Information and Assistance/Referral (I & R)" means a service for older individuals that (a) provides individuals with current information on opportunities and services available to them within their respective community, including information relating to assistive technology; (b) links individuals to the opportunities and services that are available; (c) to maximum extent practicable, ensures that individuals receive the services they need, and are aware of the opportunities available to them, by establishing adequate follow-up procedures; and (d) serves the entire community of older individuals and persons with disabilities.

"Older Individual (Person)" means an individual who is 60 years of age and older.

Staffing Requirements 650-50-15

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Hours of service will be Monday through Friday 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM. An answering system is in place during the hours I & R staff is not available.

I & R staff will complete an orientation session with the I & R Program Administrator to discuss job responsibilities and expectations. Staff will be required to read the policy and procedure manual for Aging and Disability Resource-LINK, "ABC's of I & R" manual, Social Assistance Management System (SAMS) I & R Provider Manual and SAMS I & R Caller Manual.

Staff will have the communication skills to meet the needs of special populations; i.e., older adults and persons with disabilities. Communication skills include establishing a rapport or connection with the caller, assessing the situation, clarifying to ensure an understanding of the situation, providing appropriate information and referrals and closing the call.

Staff will be required to seek Certified Information and Referral Specialist-Aging (CIRS-A) status through the AIRS Certification Program. Alliance of Information and Referral Systems (AIRS) is a national organization created to improve access to human services.

I & R staff are eligible for initial CIRS-A certification if they are currently engaged in the provision of I & R services. According to the AIRS standards, eligibility requirements for staff to take the CIRS-A exam are:

- At least 1 year of employment in I & R for applicants with a Bachelors or higher degree
- 2 years of employment in I & R for applicants with an Associates or Community College degree
- 3 years of employment in I & R for applicants with a High School diploma or GED.
- 5 years of I & R employment with no educational qualifications

Provision of Information & Referral Services 650-50-20

(Revised 5/15/2012 ML #3328)

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When calls are received on the Aging and Disability Resource-LINK, I & R staff will:

1. Answer the phone with "Aging and Disability Resource-LINK, how may I help you?"
2. Establish rapport with the caller and use active listening skills to discern the presenting problem.
3. Ask the caller how they learned about the Aging & Disability Resource-LINK and document the response in the SAMS Call Log as outlined in the manual.
4. Respond to each caller in a professional, non-judgmental manner.
5. Listen sensitively to what the caller is saying, while also being attuned to what the caller does not say.
6. Assess the caller's problems and needs by asking relevant questions to obtain information necessary for an accurate referral.
7. Not assume the responsibility of diagnosing the caller's problem, but will listen intuitively.
8. Reflect back to the caller their understanding of the concerns the caller has verbalized.
9. Remain patient during calls, speak slowly and clearly, and be prepared to repeat the information as often as needed to insure the caller obtains the correct information.

Provision of Referral Information 650-50-25

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I & R staff will provide telephone or walk-in information and referral services in which the caller has one-to-one, human contact with I & R staff.

Once the needs of the caller have been identified, I & R staff will:

1. Assure the caller that all calls are handled confidentially and no information will be released to the Department of Human Services and its contractors without the caller's verbal permission, as allowed by federal and state consent regulations.
2. Inform the caller certain information may be kept on file for the Aging and Disability Resource-LINK records.
3. If caller agrees, staff will obtain as much information on the SAMS Call Summary as the caller is willing to provide. If caller refuses to provide information, staff will affirm the caller has that option.
4. Explore what other resources and services the caller is currently receiving or if they have received information from any other source.
5. Where possible, provide a minimum of three referrals to give the inquirer a choice. Callers will be responsible for choosing which, if any, resources they wish to access.
6. Refrain from recommending any one service over another.
7. Explore with the caller if they will be able to follow up on referral information provided without further assistance.
8. If the situation requires, complete the referral(s) on behalf of the caller:

    - I & R staff will explain what information will need to be released and to whom the information will be released in order to complete the referral.
    - I & R staff will ask for the caller's verbal permission to release the information to make the referral on behalf of the caller to each specified agency or program.
    - I & R staff will document the caller's verbal agreement on the SAMS Call Summary in the computer caller screen. Access to

SAMS call log is restricted to Program Administrators and I & R staff within the Aging Services Division.

9. Respect caller confidentiality at all times. Information shared must be kept within the limits agreed upon with the caller:

    - An exception to this would be a situation where the caller may be in danger of hurting himself or herself, staff will release information as needed to obtain emergency services for the caller.

10. Before terminating calls, I & R staff will inquire if the caller has any further questions about the information provided; thank the caller for using the Aging and Disability Resource-LINK.
11. Staff will inform callers that they may receive a follow-up call from I & R staff to determine if the caller was linked to the services he or she needed.
12. A “soft transfer” of the call will be completed when staff determines that a direct transfer would be appropriate; i.e. caller deemed unable to make the call themselves or is having difficulty understanding the referral and service process. “Soft transfer” is when staff connects the caller to another party or agency and stays on the line until connection is made. When a soft transfer is deemed appropriate, I & R staff obtain the caller’s verbal permission to transfer the call to the appropriate agency. I & R staff will announce the caller to the agency and remain on the line until assured parties have been connected.
13. When completing referrals, I & R staff will approach agencies in a courteous manner, speak with the appropriate personnel, and have all relevant information for the referral at hand. Relevant information may include the caller’s name, phone number, address, age, as well as their identified needs.
14. When a referral has been completed, the Aging and Disability Resource-LINK staff will document completion of the referral on the SAMS Call Summary in the database, noting the date and the name of the person who received the referral information in order to complete follow-up calls.

Caller Confidentiality 650-50-30

(Revised 5/15/2012 ML #3328)

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Aging Services Division is governed by the written confidentiality policies of the Department of Human Services, Service Chapter 110-01 and federal, state and local laws. No caller information will be shared outside of the Department of Human Services and its contractors without first obtaining the caller's verbal permission.

If I & R staff make a referral on the behalf of the caller, staff must explain the information that would need to be released and to whom it will be released in order to complete the referral. I & R staff will ask permission to release that information to the each specified agency or program. The caller's verbal agreement to release the information will be recorded in the SAMS Call Summary on the computer caller screen. (See SAMS manual.)

An exception to this would be in situations where the caller may be in danger of hurting himself or herself or someone else. In these situations, I & R staff will release information as needed to obtain emergency services for the caller.

Emergency/Crisis Calls 650-50-35

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Callers who appear to be in a situation where it seems likely to result in harm to themself or others are considered Emergency or Crisis calls. To handle such calls, Aging and Disability Resource-LINK staff has access to mental health professionals at the Regional Human Service Centers. I & R staff will provide empathy and support to the caller, while also informing the caller that they will have the opportunity to talk with a mental health professional. Staff will obtain the caller’s name, address and phone number as quickly as possible and will transfer the caller to the respective regional Human Service Center Crisis Line. I & R staff will stay on the line until the call is answered by crisis line staff. In cases of immediate physical danger to the caller, staff may find it necessary to notify emergency services in the caller’s home area.

Relay North Dakota Calls 650-50-40

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Relay North Dakota provides full telephone accessibility to individuals who are deaf, hearing impaired or speech impaired. Specially trained communications assistants complete calls and stay on-line to “relay” messages between individuals with impairments and the parties they are calling. Relay North Dakota is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. There are no restrictions on the length of calls or the number of calls individuals may place. Relay North Dakota is a confidential service. No records are kept of calls.

The service is free within the caller’s local area. Long distance calls are billed at a reduced rate. Direct dial, collect calls, third-party calls, credit card and calling cards can be used through the service.

Both voice and TTY users may use Relay North Dakota to place calls by using these numbers:

TTY: 800-366-6888 or 711

Voice: 800-366-6889

Translators 650-50-45

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In the event a caller speaks a language other than English, I & R staff will attempt to explain to the caller a translator will be contacted that can converse with the caller. If possible, staff will elicit the caller's native language and phone number so an appropriate translator can be contacted. The Department of Human Services has a contract with CTS LanguageLink to provide telephone based Interpretation Services for the state of North Dakota. This service can be accessed by calling 877-650-8027 and providing the Call Center Service Representative with the following information:

- Account #9823
- Staff person's full name
- Department number
- Language needed

Voice Mail Callers - Response 650-50-50

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For callers who reach the Aging and Disability Resource-LINK after hours or when staff is on another call, a voice mail system is in place that allows the caller to leave their name and phone number, as well as a brief message. Calls left on the voice mail system will be returned within a maximum of one business day. I & R staff should respond to voice mail calls using the following steps:

1. Record the caller's name and phone number in the SAMS Call Summary. Record the time of the voice message.
2. Staff should return the call, working only with the individual who placed the original call. If that individual is not home or not available, staff will inquire when the individual might be available. In keeping with the Aging and Disability Resource-LINK policy on confidentiality, no message will be left; the person answering the phone will be thanked and the call will be ended.
3. Every attempt to return the call will be documented in the SAMS Call Summary. After three unsuccessful attempts within a two business day timespan, staff will discontinue calling.

Internet and E-Mail Request for Information - Response 650-50-55

(Revised 5/15/2012 ML #3328)

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I & R staff have access to the Internet and the use of electronic mail to facilitate the provision of quality services to individuals seeking information or services. E-mail requests through the Aging & Disability Resource-LINK e-mail account will receive a response by the end of the next business day at a minimum. E-mail inquiries are subject to the same guidelines regarding confidentiality as inquires received via telephone.

Inquiries for Services in Other States - Response 650-50-60

(Revised 5/15/2012 ML #3328)

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For callers seeking information on services for older individuals, caregivers or persons with disabilities in other states, staff will refer the caller to the national Eldercare Locator or the National Council on Independent Living. If the caller is asking for information that is readily available, staff may use their discretion to supply the requested information.

Eldercare Locator is a nationwide public service of the U.S. Administration on Aging providing state-by-state information on services available for older adults and their families. The toll-free number is 800-677-1116. I & R staff should inform callers they will need to provide the zip code for the area in which they are seeking services when they use the Eldercare Locator.

The National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) is a national organization that advances independent living and the rights of people with disabilities through consumer-driven advocacy. Statewide information on disability services is available by calling toll-free 877-525-4300.

Aging and Disability Resource - Link Marketing 650-50-65

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Public awareness of the Aging and Disability Resource-LINK is of primary importance to ensure individual access to services. Promotional activities will be conducted on a consistent basis throughout the year. Promotional activities may include but not be limited to: television and radio interviews, newspaper articles, presentations, mailings, health fair exhibits and use of promotional materials.

Resource-LINK staff is responsible to research and purchase promotional items within the Division budget and with prior approval from the Division Director.

Resource-LINK staff will follow the procedures set by the State Procurement Office when ordering promotional items and brochures.

Resource-LINK staff is responsible to maintain an inventory of promotional items in stock and keep a record of promotional materials being provided for dissemination by the Regional Aging Services Program Administrators, other Department staff or as requested by community service agencies.

Resource-LINK staff will participate in statewide senior events whenever possible. Resource-LINK staff will keep a written record of the events attended and the promotional items disseminated at each event.

The Resource-LINK brochure is updated, reviewed, and submitted for printing on an as needed basis and within the Division budget and with prior approval from the Division Director.

I & R staff will provide informational demonstrations of the Resource-LINK website upon request.

Advocacy Services 650-50-70

(Revised 5/15/2012 ML #3328)

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At times staff may need to provide advocacy services for callers. Providing advocacy services means a Resource-LINK staff will take an active role in assisting the caller with obtaining services. Staff may need to make phone calls, write letters, or speak to other agencies or programs on behalf of callers. Situations where advocacy may be required include but are not limited to:

1. Callers who may lack assertiveness in pressing for needed services.
2. Callers who may lack awareness or knowledge of their rights.
3. Callers who may lack knowledge of, or who are confused about, existing services and application processes.
4. Callers who may have a difficult time communicating their needs or concerns.
5. Callers who may find it difficult to ask for help, who perceive asking for help as a weakness or dependency.
6. Callers who may experience language difficulties in dealing with agencies or programs.
7. Agencies that may have rigid or confusing screening processes or policies.
8. Agencies that may have financial limitations.
9. Agencies that callers identify as not being respectful or helpful.
10. When advocating for callers, I & R staff must obtain verbal permission from the caller to release information. If the caller does not approve the release of information, staff may still complete advocacy attempts, but will proceed in a “generic” manner without providing identifying information about the caller.
11. If I & R staff have questions or concerns regarding the provision of advocacy services, they will consult the Aging and Disability Resource-LINK Program Administrator to develop a plan for appropriate advocacy services.

Referrals for Options Counseling Services 650-50-75

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Aging and Disability Resource-LINK staff will make referrals for options counseling services whenever appropriate. Situations where a referral for options counseling might be appropriate are, but not limited to:

- When information on long-term supports and services is requested
- When an individual has unmet care needs
- When the caller is in need of assistance with futures planning or benefits counseling
- When a long distance caregiver has concerns about the increased frailty or care needs of a family member
- When it becomes evident the caller would be best served by more individual staff time and attention

It is the policy of the Aging and Disability Resource-LINK to make all possible referrals to options counseling staff to assist callers in their local community.

Aging and Disability Resource-LINK staff maintains a list of the options counseling contact agencies and staff for each region to access options counseling services.

Follow-up Calls 650-50-80

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Follow up calls provide a second opportunity to assist callers with obtaining needed services. Additional assistance in locating or using service may be necessary. I & R staff will conduct follow up within two weeks of the call with inquirers in situations where I & R staff believe the inquirer does not have the necessary capacity to follow through and resolve their problem.

For quality assurance purposes, I & R staff will conduct follow up calls on 10% of other inquiries on a monthly basis.

Follow up shall consist of contacting the inquirer and or organization to which a referral has been made to find out if service is being provided and the need is being met, and if the service is not being provided, why not.

Follow up may also be used to determine if the inquirer is satisfied with the I & R service as a means of ascertaining the effectiveness of the I & R services provided.

If applicable, changes in agencies or services gathered during follow up calls will be verified by I & R staff and the resource database information will be updated.

If the inquirer has not received services or the need has not been met, I & R staff shall determine whether there is still a need and make additional appropriate referrals and consider a referral for options counseling services. I & R staff will document in SAMS follow up results (that the service was not received) for future reference.

Information gathered during the follow up process may be used as a further means of evaluating the effectiveness of existing community service providers and for identifying gaps and overlaps in community services.

Aging and Disability Resource - LINK Database 650-50-85

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Information contained in the Aging and Disability Resource-LINK database is maintained in the Social Assistance Management System (SAMS) computerized record keeping system managed by Harmony Information Systems and Assist Guide Information Systems (AGIS).

Data Elements 650-50-85-05

(Revised 5/15/2012 ML #3328)

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A standardized profile shall be developed for each organization that is a part of the local community service delivery system or other geographic area covered by I & R service.

A profile shall be developed on each organization and agency that shall include but is not limited to:

1. A legal name, common name, or acronym
2. Telephone number
3. Hours and days of service
4. The service provided
5. The eligibility requirements and intake procedures
6. The area served
7. The branch offices
8. Accessibility (i.e. Assist and Barriers for example: TTY/TTD number, languages spoken, make home visits for intake, provide transportation for intake, does not provide assistance in completing forms, not located on a bus route) and restrictions on facility use
9. Sponsorship
10. Fee structure

Indexing the Resource Database/Search Methods 650-50-85-10

(Revised 5/15/2012 ML #3328)

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Information in the resource database shall be indexed and accessible in ways that support the I & R process.

Information in the resource database shall be retrievable by a variety of search methods including the following:

1. Alphabetically by organization name
2. Type of service provided with extensive cross references
3. County or city location
4. Zip code
5. Key words

Classification System 650-50-85-15

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The I & R service uses a classification system based on standard service terminology to facilitate retrieval of service information, to increase the reliability of planning data, to make comparison and evaluation process consistent and reliable, and to facilitate national comparisons of data.

The I & R service uses the AIRS taxonomy service classification system. Taxonomy is a classification system that indexes community resources based on the services they provide and the target populations they serve. It provides a structure for information and tells people what is in the information system and how to find it.

Taxonomy additions will be updated and integrated into the I & R database as they occur. A complete review and update of the Resource-LINK version Taxomony will be conducted at least once every 18 months.

New Resources 650-50-85-20

(Revised 5/15/2012 ML #3328)

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To assist in maintaining an up-to-date database, staff will complete such activities as: scanning daily newspapers, listening to news programs, gathering brochures when out in the community, etc. When a new resource is located, I & R staff will determine if the resource meets inclusion criteria for the Aging and Disability Resource-LINK and if it does, will either call or send a provider information form, requesting that the form be completed and returned to the Aging and Disability Resource-LINK so that the resource can be added to the database.

Verification of Information 650-50-85-25

(Revised 5/15/2012 ML #3328)

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It is important all information added to the database be verified for accuracy. Verifying information will be done by following these steps:

1. Determine if the resource is already listed in the database.
2. If the resource is already listed, any written material such as an Update Form or a Provider Information Form should be carefully compared to existing information. Any changes or corrections should be made in the database as needed. If questions arise about conflicts between new information and information existing in the database, staff will contact the agency or program by telephone to clarify any concerns.
3. If the resource is not listed in the database, staff will either call or send a cover letter and a Provider Information Form to the agency requesting that information be provided to the Aging and Disability Resource-LINK about their services.
4. When the information is received or the Provider Information Form is completed and returned to the Aging and Disability Resource-LINK, it will be added to the Resource-LINK database in SAMS.

Updating the Database 650-50-85-30

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In order to provide callers with accurate and comprehensive information, a 100% update rate within a 12 month cycle of records in the resource database will be accomplished by the Resource-LINK staff.

1. Each resource will be sent or e-mailed a printout of the information currently listed in the database on the agency as well as any programs it may sponsor. A cover letter will be included with the printout requesting that the agency review the information and make any additions or corrections. The cover letter will also include a request that the updated information be returned to the Aging and Disability Resource-LINK at the Aging Services Division office within 30 days.
2. As updated information is returned from agencies and programs, it will be entered into the Provider section of the SAMS database. (See SAMS I & R Provider Manual for specific instructions.)
3. If the request for updated information is not returned within 30 days, a second request will be sent. The request will inform the agency that lack of a response may result in deletion of their services from the database. If there has been no response within a month after the second letter, I & R staff may delete the service from the SAMS database.
4. Providers may also request an update of their information through the Aging & Disability Resource-LINK website page. Resource-LINK staff will receive an e-mail containing the updated information and will make the requested changes. (See SAMS I & R Provider Manual for specific instructions.)

Interim Changes to Database 650-50-85-35

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It is expected that provider information may change on a random, ongoing basis. For interim changes, I & R staff will update the database when they become aware of changes.

Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria 650-50-85-40

(Revised 5/15/2012 ML #3328)

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The resource files for the Aging and Disability Resource-LINK consist of health and human services programs that enhance the quality of life for individuals and the community. Inclusion of a particular organization on the database does not constitute an endorsement, nor does exclusion constitute disapproval of an organization by the ND Aging and Disability Resource-LINK. The inclusion/exclusion criterion includes the following:

Included in Resource File

1. Nonprofit agencies providing a community service
2. Organizations (such as churches, social clubs) which offer a service to the community
3. Private companies which provide a community service (must be licensed by the state of North Dakota, if required)
4. Self-help or support groups
5. Government offices or programs
6. Hospitals, health clinics, nursing homes, assisted living facilities, basic care facilities within the state of North Dakota
7. Professional organizations (such as the Alzheimer's Association, American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, or organizations in the social service field)
8. Legal services that are provided at no cost or on a sliding fee scale
9. Agencies that provide mental health services and counseling services (must be licensed by the state of North Dakota, if required)
10. Agencies that provide adaptive equipment or assistive devices
11. Senior Citizens Centers, congregate meal programs, home delivered meal programs, health maintenance services
12. County social service agencies, in-home care providers and services
13. Advocacy groups
14. Pharmacies and grocery stores that provide home delivery or delivery by mail

15. Toll free phone services, if they offer information, services, support, community service

Excluded from our Resource File

1. Agencies that deny services on the basis of race, sexual orientation, religious belief, or national origin or that violate Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Age Discrimination Act, the Americans with Disability Act, and the North Dakota Human Rights Act
2. Nonprofit agencies that do not provide a direct service or information about services
3. Individual practitioners providing medical services, legal services or counseling services
4. Insurance providers
5. Retail services
6. Dating services
7. Lobbying groups

Alternative Formats of Aging and Disability Resource-LINK Database 650-50-85-45

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For consumers who request material in alternative formats, staff may utilize the following resources:

North Dakota School for the Blind

500 Stanford Road

Grand Forks, ND 58203

1-800-421-1181

The ND School for the Blind will transcribe materials into large print or Braille for a minimal fee, and will also read materials onto tape. If consumers are registered with the North Dakota State Library, materials will be transcribed into alternative formats at no charge to the consumer. Consumers may register with the library by contacting:

ND State Library

604 E Boulevard Avenue

Bismarck, ND 58505

1-800-582-8032

Caller Data Collection 650-50-85-50

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I & R services use a system of collecting and organizing consumer data for appropriate referral and to help identify gaps in service available throughout the state.

1. The consumer data collection and reporting methods will facilitate the analyses needed to support:
   a. The human service needs of the consumer
   b. Management information needs
   c. Community needs assessment
2. The data collected will provide information on consumer needs to help identify:
   a. Gaps in service
   b. Insufficient resources
   c. Level of services requested
   d. Trends of unmet needs
   e. Socio-economic and demographic data
3. Consumers have the right to decide what information they want to share with I & R staff.
4. Data collection reports should facilitate the gathering of the following information, as available from the caller:
   a. Family name, address, telephone number
   b. Demographic data (age, sex, race/ethnicity, rural/urban, functional status, income, etc.)
   c. Name of individual for whom services are sought if other than caller
   d. Problems presented by caller and problems as assessed by staff
   e. Services needed
   f. Organizations to which caller was referred
   g. Nature of request

h. Method of contact with I & R service (letter, telephone, walk-in, e-mail)
i. How did the caller find out about the I & R service
j. Follow up results, including whether or not the caller received services

Data Collection and Reporting 650-50-85-55

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I & R service activity is collected in the SAMS computerized record. The data collected in this system consists of documentation of service referrals and consumer characteristics.

I & R service provides specific data for the North Dakota State Plan on Aging and the state program report.

Provision of I & R services by the Regional Aging Services Program Administrator (RASPA) is submitted to the Division office in the Monthly RASPA Report. RASPA I & R data is contained in the Monthly RASPA Report and is incorporated into the report of I & R service activity on a monthly basis.