

STRATEGIC LESSON LEARNED

“People need to be able to find their way around our organisation and enjoy a sense of welcome”

Our experiences have reinforced the importance of creating a welcoming place for people, even if they are appearing before court or attending to other justice matters. We have seen that calm people are easier to work with. They aren't as anxious or disruptive. This ultimately serves justice as they are more likely to comply with orders and other interventions and are not pulled between responsibilities (e.g. treatment v child care).

Examples of how this was reflected in NJC practice (our 'service principles'):

1. We go to clients (the worker greets clients at reception) when they arrive rather than clients having to find the worker. If clients need to wait for a worker, we provide comfortable and hospitable places for them to wait;
2. We provide for the needs of clients coming into the centre (for example, there are two play spaces for children – and for parents to meet with workers while they have their children with them) because we respect that clients may have obligations beyond those they have to the court. We want to avoid having people pulled between responsibilities (e.g. treatment v. child care);
3. Our security personnel provide a concierge function at the NJC and are the first welcome most visitors have. This welcome de-emphasizes the 'social control' of security and stresses a welcome function. This is explicitly written into the contract for security personnel who work at the NJC.

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A reflection that captures this lesson:

When I go to other agencies and have to talk through glass security and I am given nowhere to sit and no sense of when someone is going to come and speak with me, I feel highly offended and angry. If I feel that as a public servant just going to a government building for a meeting and am not anxious or in trouble or lost, imagine how tough that must be for the client who is anxious and lost and worried?

That's one of the reasons we have the concierge function built into the role of our security staff – so they can talk to visitors beyond giving a brief instruction.

NJC staff member, May 2011

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