
Communications and Information

Effective communication is essential to a well-run social agency. Communication occurs in a variety of oral and written forms. Most administrators spend the bulk of their working days involved in communication using the range of modalities available to them.

Organizational communication moves in a variety of directions and may be deemed either formal or informal.

The conversation is the most common form of communication found in organizations. Meetings are also common and may be seen as a series of structured conversations that have certain elements in common. Written communications may be a basic medium of communication, or they may serve primarily to confirm and record messages delivered orally.

Some of the most startling and impressive developments of twentieth-century social science have been advances in our understanding of the twin concepts of communication as a social process and information as the stuff of human communications. Communications presents a double challenge for social administration. On the one hand, communications theories are at the heart of virtually every advancement beyond the rather limited rational man approaches of early administration theorists and the even more

limited machine models of organization. On the other hand, communication as a socioemotional process as that idea is understood in modern clinical social work practice is a set of ideas to which it is difficult to give adequate attention in social administration. Generally speaking, administrative theories of communication tread lightly when they enter at all into such areas as communication of affect and nonverbal communication. In fact, communication is generally treated largely as a cognitive information-transfer process throughout most of the management sciences. Thus, what is presented in chapters 14 and 15 may not touch upon a variety of communications topics held to be of interest or important in clinical practice, such as nonverbal communication. The chapters do, however, offer a faithful rendition of the state of the art as it is practiced in contemporary social administration.