



Health & Safety Alert #32-12-05

Misappropriation/Theft

Purpose of This Alert

A review of Major Unusual Incidents in the past six months has revealed ongoing trends related to Misappropriation. The major issue has to do with the individuals' possessions, including cash and personal items, are being stolen within the home, community and at the workshop.

The most common items being stolen include, in order of occurrence:

1. Cash
2. Identity Theft (information, SS#, DOB, etc.)
3. Electronics (Radio/T.V.)
4. Clothing items
5. Groceries
6. Utilities

The root cause identified in many of the individual thefts is a lack of an accountability system. These poor accounting systems don't allow the investigative agent/police to determine who is responsible for the theft as accountability, monitoring, and oversight is minimal. We all know that cash is necessary to ensure that an individual's needs are met. The ways in which cash, information and personal possessions are accounted for throughout the field vary tremendously from provider to provider.

The following helpful hints have been provided to assist providers of service with proactively preventing thefts.

Preventing or Reducing Occurrences of Theft (Misappropriation)

- Establish an accounting system that:
 - Requires receipts with purchases.
 - Tracks who is handling the money from distribution to purchase.
 - Reconciles accounts monthly.
 - Conducts regular inventories.
- Ensure that lockboxes, safes, and other means of money storage are in good working order and access limited to identified persons.

- Develop an inventory system to trace purchases and an individual's possessions, particularly electronic devices such as TV, DVD player, camera, etc. Inventories should be checked at least quarterly.
- Protect individuals' confidential information to those needing to know. Examples include Social Security number, bank account numbers.
- Establish a key system for support staff rather than keep the house open and unattended.

Practices to Avoid

- Allowing staff to borrow money or property from an individual.
- Allowing funds to be expended without receipts.
- Commingling of funds of the individual with agency funds.
- Commingling of funds of the individual with other individuals.
- Having unsecured lockboxes.
- Having access to the lockbox from numerous staff.
- Allowing the house to be unlocked and unstaffed.

For questions or comments regarding the above Alert, please contact the MUI/Registry Unit at (614) 995-3810.

12/05