

Creating Your Operating Guidelines

When an organization wishes to join the International Cancer Information Service (ICISG) as a member, it must adhere to the operating guidelines of the Cancer Information Service. The CIS Tool Box and the Assessment Tool are resources to aid in meeting the operating guidelines.

Operating guidelines include:

1. **Mission statement**
2. **Service rationale (who, what, when, where and for whom)**
3. **Service delivery protocol**
4. **Personnel:**
 - **recruitment and selection**
 - **training**
 - **supervision**
 - **performance review**
5. **Quality assurance and evaluation**

Mission Statement

Each CIS should develop its own mission statement that summarizes the goals or purposes of the organization.

For example, the Mission of the Canadian Cancer Information Service: The Canadian Cancer Society's Cancer Information Service (CIS) is a national, bilingual and personalized service that provides comprehensive and credible information about cancer and community resources to cancer patients and their family and friends, the general public and healthcare professionals. It is accessible by toll-free phone, email, mail, fax and visits Monday – Friday, 9 a.m. – 6 p.m. local time.

Service rationale (who, what, when, where, for whom)

Each CIS organization should be able to publicly define its role and client group. The role of each CIS and client group will vary according to:

- the needs of the local community
- available resources (fiscal and human)
- external support (organizational, political and community)
- cultural mores

If you are planning on establishing a Cancer Information Service, review the Assessment Tool for a Cancer Information Service Program (it can help you conduct a basic assessment of the needs and proposed structure for a new service) and the CIS Tool Box.

The role of an individual CIS organization may include, but not be limited to the following:

- Providing cancer related information, including information regarding support services via the telephone, email, contact visit or public lecture
- Providing counselling via the telephone, contact visit or email chat room
- Developing cancer related information for the general community
- Conducting cancer related health promotion programs
- Conducting group programs for people dealing with cancer
- Developing and operating a peer support program for people dealing with cancer
- Developing and operating a program of financial assistance for people dealing with cancer
- Representing the needs of people dealing with cancer by participating in multidisciplinary or political committees
- Advocating for people dealing with cancer with funding bodies
- Sponsoring cancer related research, both clinical and psychosocial.

Note: Some ICISG operate within larger organizations that have departments that deal with community education programs, cancer support services and publications. Part of the role of these CIS organizations will be to inform other departments of gaps in service identified through interaction with the client group(s). For CIS organizations without this organizational structure, the role of CIS would include development or accessing appropriate community education programs, support services or educational material.

Because the needs of the local community (available resources, external support and cultural mores) are dynamic in nature, the role of each CIS and the client group is likely to change over time. Individual CIS organizations should have mechanisms in place to identify, monitor and respond appropriately to change. While the fundamental client groups for individual CIS organizations are people dealing with cancer and the general public who have concerns related to cancer, other client groups could also include, healthcare professionals, hospitals, government bodies, funding bodies and community organizations.

Service Delivery Protocol

Each CIS organization should be able to publicly define its role and client group. The role of each CIS and client group will vary according to:

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- available resources (fiscal and human)
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If you are planning on establishing a Cancer Information Service, review the Assessment Tool for a Cancer Information Service Program (it can help you conduct a basic assessment of the needs and proposed structure for a new service) and the CIS Tool Box.

The role of an individual CIS organization may include, but not be limited to the following:

- Providing cancer related information, including information regarding support services via the telephone, email, contact visit or public lecture.
- Providing counseling via the telephone, contact visit or email chat room.
- Developing cancer related information for the general community.
- Conducting cancer related health promotion programs.
- Conducting group programs for people dealing with cancer.
- Developing and operating a peer support program for people dealing with cancer.
- Developing and operating a program of financial assistance for people dealing with cancer.
- Representing the needs of people dealing with cancer by participating in multidisciplinary or political committees
- Advocating for people dealing with cancer with funding bodies.
- Sponsoring cancer related research, both clinical and psychosocial.

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- healthcare professionals
- hospitals
- government bodies
- funding bodies
- community organizations

Service Delivery

Consistent with ‘Service Rationale’, service delivery will vary according to:

- the needs of the local community
- available resources (fiscal and human)

- external support (organizational, political and community)
- cultural mores

There is a wide range of possible models for service delivery. For example, some individual CIS organizations have access to advanced telephone technology, computers, databases, the Internet, medical, nursing and allied health personnel, and health promotion officers, along with abundant funding. Clearly these organizations will be able to offer a service quite different from CIS organizations that do not have these resources. Additionally, it may be more appropriate in some cultures to offer face-to-face information and support rather than the same service via the telephone or other technological medium.

Regardless of the circumstances of each individual CIS organization, service delivery should be outlined with respect to the following:

- the scope of the service
- the method/s of delivery
- the qualifications and training requirements of the persons delivering the service
- how and where records of service delivery will be kept
- how the service delivery will be monitored and assessed
- a strategic plan for service delivery enhancement
- how the service will be financed

Personnel

Various models for CIS organizations have been adopted globally. Differences reflect the varied goals of the services, the fiscal and human resources available and political and community support for the organization. These differences need to be considered when determining staffing needs.

Recruitment and Selection

Recruitment and selection of appropriately qualified staff will depend on the scope of the service offered by each individual CIS organization. Each CIS will have a documented selection process that ensures that recruited personnel have the necessary skills and knowledge required for their role.

Selection criteria should examine the individual's background, attitudes, values, knowledge and skills. Depending on the goals and circumstances of each CIS, personnel might include one or more of the following roles:

- Director of CIS
- Professional counsellors such as psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers
- Nurse counsellors, with oncology training and experience
- Information specialists with a health degree and an interest in oncology

- Enquiries officers – persons who are able to take calls and provide information on prevention and early detection of some cancers and who refer callers to counsellors when more supportive intervention, or clinical information is required
- Data manager(s) – persons who are able to determine data needs and provide data information for the service
- Volunteers – who might fulfill a variety of roles, from peer support to administrative assistance

Each CIS will have a clearly defined role description for each of the CIS team.

Training

CIS will provide initial introductory training for personnel that will equip them to fulfill the role for which they are employed.

Training of CIS personnel will depend on the knowledge and skills the individual brings to the role and the role for which they are employed.

CIS will provide opportunities for ongoing development of knowledge and skills.

In addition, personnel that belong a profession, such as nurses, social workers and psychologists, are expected to take responsibility for expanding and developing their counselling skills and knowledge base through avenues offered outside of the CIS organization.

CIS organizations will develop a training manual appropriate to the needs of the personnel and the roles they fulfill.

Supervision

CIS will ensure provision of appropriate supervision, debriefing and support to all personnel.

Persons appropriately qualified to supervise each member of the team should offer to supervise personnel.

Performance review

Each member of the CIS team will have an annual performance review to ensure that:

- personal performance and competencies are reviewed
- personal goals and objectives are reviewed and strategies determined to achieve these goals
- personal performance and goals are in accord with CIS goals and objectives

Quality Assurance and Evaluation

CIS will ensure that service delivery is continuously monitored to assure quality service and is evaluated against CIS goals and objectives for service delivery.

