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Creating High-Quality Case Management Documentation

switchboard
connecting resettlement experts





Today's Speakers



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Switchboard Throwback Thursdays



Did you miss a Switchboard webinar? Catch our top sessions, back by popular demand, now with **Switchboard's Throwback Thursdays!**

Our new **Throwback Thursday series** brings back our most-requested webinars, giving you a second chance to catch the insights you need. While recordings are always available, joining live offers a unique opportunity to ask questions and engage with fellow service providers.

As with all our sessions, this webinar is open to **all refugee service providers** across state agencies, resettlement organizations, and partner groups.



Learning Objectives



By the end of this session, you will be able to:

1

EXPLAIN

the importance of documentation within the case management cycle

2

DESCRIBE

different elements of a case file—including case notes, service plans, and critical incident reports—that adhere to most program guidelines

3

APPLY

new tools and techniques to improve the quality and efficiency of case management documentation



The Case Management Cycle

Recognizing the Importance of Documentation

Case Management

Facilitates Client Wellness and Autonomy Through...



Case Management Approach



Client-Centered

**Acknowledges
Cultural Context**

Strengths-Based

Trauma-Informed





Phases of Case Management

**Initial
Engagement**



Goal-Setting



**Termination/
Discharge**



Documentation Throughout the Three Phases of Case Management



Initial Engagement

- Intake documentation
- Case notes
- Screening

Goal-Setting

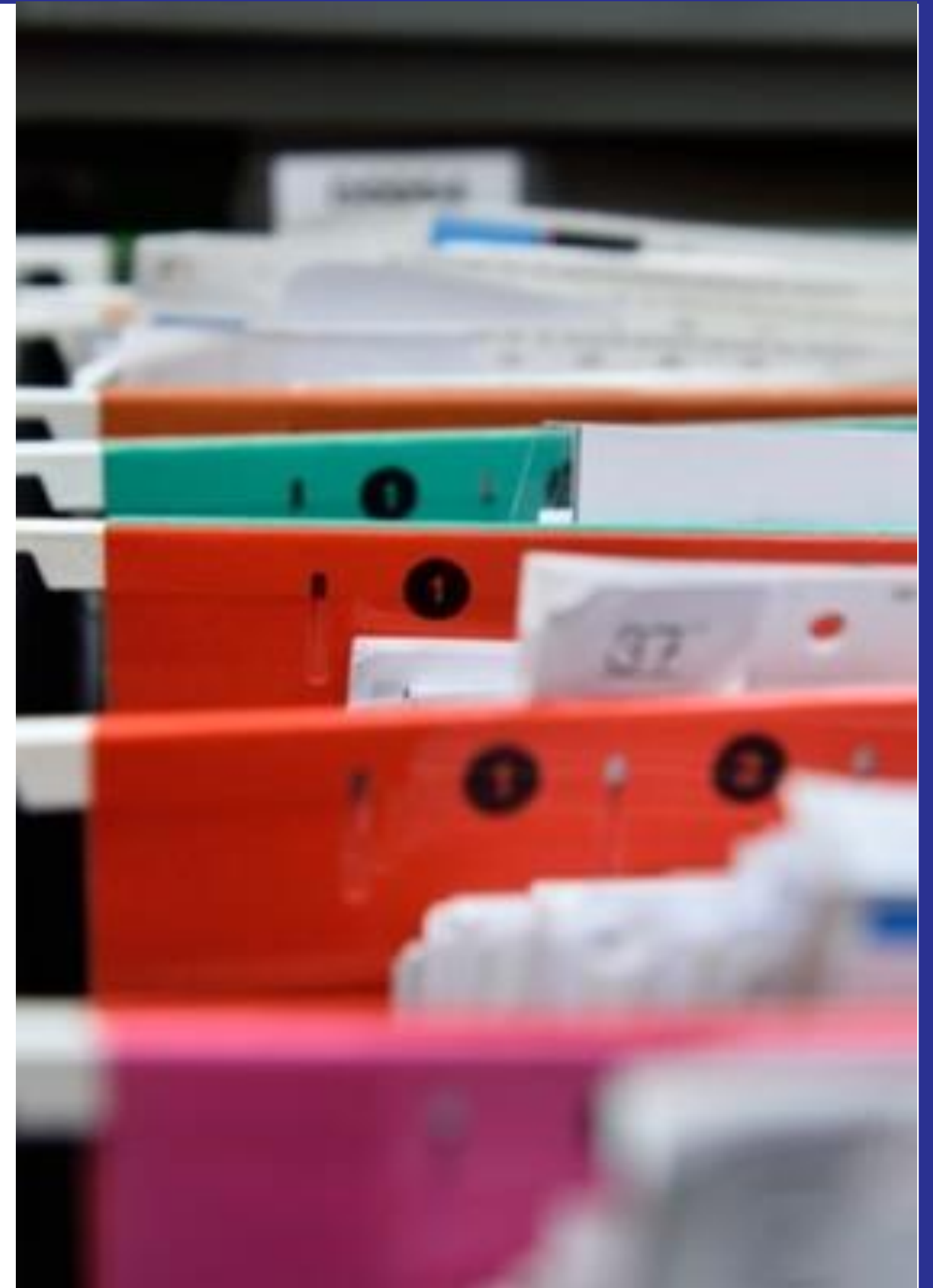
- Case notes
- Assessment
- Service plan
- Periodic updates

Termination/Discharge

- Case notes
- Service plan (review)
- Termination summary

Why Document?

- Accountability
- Tracking of client progress
- Contractual requirement
- Ethical/professional responsibility
- Communication and collaboration





The Case File

Sample Case File Organization



Intake

Intake Documents

- Client Rights and Responsibilities
- Confidentiality
- Other client signatures

Identification

Income Verification

Case Notes

Case Notes

(stored in chronological order)

Service Documents

Assessments

Service Plans

Periodic Updates

Termination
Paperwork

Case Management

Referrals

Applications

Additional
Information

Releases of
Information



Case Notes

Case notes are a record of the interactions between client and case manager



What to Include in Case Notes

Remember the 6 W's

Who?

Document who was present

When?

Write when services happened, in order of when they happened

Why?

State why the appointment happened



What?

Describe services provided

Where?

Record where the service occurred

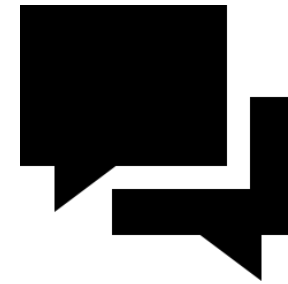
What next?

List the next steps

Case Note Example



“Client and CM discussed client’s difficulty paying her rent this month. CM will look into rental assistance options for this month. Client thanked case manager.”



How would you make this an effective case note?

Service Plans



- Reason for service
- Client strengths and supports
- Goal
- Objective
- Target end date
- *Any program-specific modifications

Service Plan	
Client Name and ID#:	
Type of Plan:	<input type="checkbox"/> Initial <input type="checkbox"/> Update <input type="checkbox"/> Extension of Services
Date of Service Plan:	
Area of Need:	Strengths and Supports:
Goal:	
Objective(s):	
Target End Date:	



Set “SMART” Goals



- **S**pecific
- **M**easurable
- **A**chievable
- **R**elevant
- **T**ime-bound



Short-Term SMART Goals

- Set achievable goals that align with the client's long-term goals
- Balance program requirements with the client's priorities
- Review goals throughout the service period
- Update goals as needed



Long-Term SMART Goals

- Guide clients to visualize their ideal future
- Help clients prioritize their goals to get to the end goal
- Break long-term goals into short-term goals; discuss how to keep short-term goals realistic
- Plan to track progress

Periodic Updates

- Check on client progress toward service plans or goals
 - Client-specific (e.g., special/vulnerable clients)
 - Program or agency requirement (e.g., court mandate)
 - Funding requirement
- Routine, required, or best practice





Termination Summaries

- Termination or closure letter
- Closure checklist
- Summary of services
- Transfer of services



Specialized Documentation



Mandatory Reporting

- Abuse and neglect of children and vulnerable adults

Critical Incidents

- Emergencies where police or ambulances respond
- Disasters
- Client death

Other Crises

- Safety concerns related to suicidal or homicidal thoughts or actions
- Disclosures of intimate partner violence



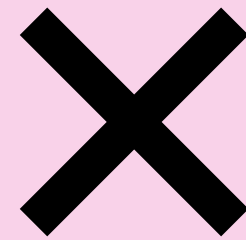
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Tools and Techniques

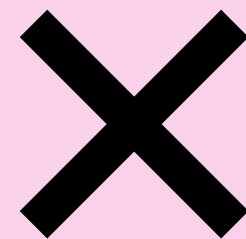
Improving Quality and Efficiency of Case
Management Documentation



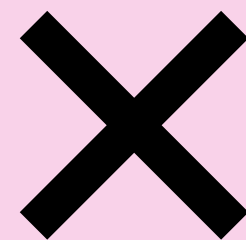
What NOT to Include



Opinions or commentary



False or unrelated information

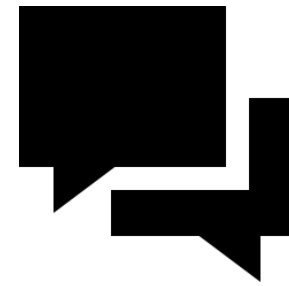


Emotional reactions or value judgments

Practice



“Client and CM met for scheduled appointment to discuss employment. Client doesn’t like any job options I give her and refuses to interview. Client is hard to work with and maybe needs a new case manager.”



What are some words or expressions used in this case note that you would want to **avoid**?



Documentation Considerations



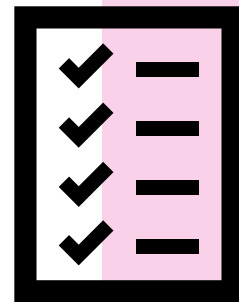
- Include client voice
- Be comprehensive but concise
- Write in chronological order
- Track accomplished and remaining tasks and goals
- Complete at the end of each day

Identifying and Incorporating Client Strengths





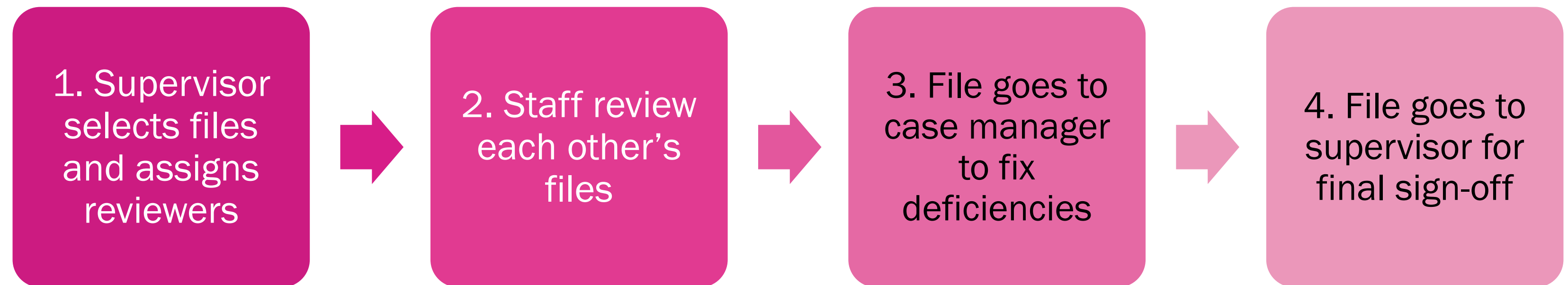
Using Templates and Tools



- Improves **consistency** and **quality control**
- Serves as a **memory aid** for staff
- **Customized** for each program
- Broad enough to capture **unique elements of each client** and allow for client voice



Peer Case File Reviews





Protecting Confidentiality

- Is everyone's responsibility!
- Build trust
- Use releases of information and encrypted emails
- Inform clients of limitations to confidentiality
- Lock filing cabinets and screens

Time Management Tips



1

Prioritize tasks

2

**Set boundaries
with clients**

3

**Schedule time
for case notes**

4

**Limit
distractions**

5

**Don't let it pile
up**

6

**Use structured
templates**



Questions?



Type your question in the **Q&A**

Learning Objectives



We hope you are now able to:

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the importance of documentation within the case management cycle

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3

Apply

new tools and techniques to improve the quality and efficiency of case management documentation

Recommended Resources



Switchboard

- **Guide:** [Creating High-Quality Case Management Documentation](#)
- **Guide:** [Considerations for Implementing New Case Management Software in Resettlement Programs](#)
- **Blog:** [Case Management Documentation: Making the Paperwork Work for You](#)
- **Toolkit:** [SMART Indicators Checklist, with Case Study – Switchboard](#)
- **Archived Webinar:** [Creating Balance In Case Management](#)

Center for Victims of Torture

- **Video:** [Case Management 101: Case Notes](#)



Creating High-Quality Case Management Documentation

This guide, created by Switchboard, will teach you how to create high-quality case management documentation. You will learn how to: recognize the importance of documentation within the case management cycle; describe and create different elements of a case file, including case notes, service plans, and critical incident reports; and utilize new techniques to improve the quality and efficiency of case management documentation.



Stay Connected



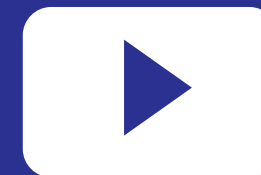
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