

AAA Client-Centered Case Management Standards

Approved by AAA Board: 7/6/05
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Definition of Client-Centered Case Management

Client-centered case management is based on the recognition that a trusting and empowering direct relationship between case manager and client is essential to facilitate a client's use of services along a continuum of care and to restore or maintain independent functioning to the fullest extent possible. It requires the case manager to develop and maintain a professional relationship with the client, which may include linking the client with systems that provide needed advocacy, services, resources, and opportunities.

A case manager assesses the needs of the client and the client's family, when appropriate, and arranges, coordinates, monitors, evaluates, and advocates for multiple services to meet specific complex needs and preferences.

The conduct of the case manager follows the NASW Code of Ethics. (See "Best Practices of Case Management Manual" for Code of Ethics definition.) The focus of case management is client centered, recognizing the importance of each client's interests, worth, and right to self-determination and confidentiality.

Goals

The primary goal of client-centered case management is to optimize client functioning by a thorough assessment of needs. Using this assessment, the case manager, with the client's input, develops a plan to provide services in the most efficient and effective manner. Client-centered case management rests on a foundation of professional training, values, knowledge, theory, and skills used in the service of attaining goals established in conjunction with the client and the client's family and/or significant individuals, when appropriate. Client-centered case management is ongoing and includes the following specific goals:

- To promote and enhance, when possible, the skills of the client in accessing and utilizing supports and services
- To develop the capacities of social networks and relevant human services providers to promote the functioning and well-being of the client to enable independent functioning
- To promote service effectiveness while providing services and supports in the most efficient manner possible
- To link, create, and promote formal and informal systems to provide the client with resources, services, and opportunities

STANDARD 1: The case manager should have post-high school training of an associate, bachelor, or masters degree in a field related to health and human services. The case manager shall have the knowledge, skills, and experience necessary to competently perform client-centered case management duties.

Interpretation: The practice of client-centered case management is multifaceted and requires the case manager to be an advocate, consultant, evaluator, planner, and a resource source. The case manager has the knowledge and skills needed to perform case management duties.

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The case manager strives to become and remain proficient in professional case management practice and performance by keeping current with emerging related knowledge. The employing organization should provide training opportunities to enhance the case management staff's skills.

In addition to academic credentials and experience, the case manager understands characteristics of the client population and the setting in which it is served.

STANDARD 2: The case manager shall use professional knowledge, skills, and competence in serving the client whose interests are paramount.

Interpretation: The case manager's primary responsibility is to the client. To adhere to the position of putting the client's best interests first may be difficult—particularly in a climate of scarce resources. Cost containment goals may conflict with provision of services for the best interest of the client. While working within the context of the agency's goals and resources, the case manager ensures that each client receives appropriate assistance by providing accurate and complete information about the extent and nature of available services and by assisting the client to decide which services will best meet his or her needs. Personal or professional gain is never put before the client's best interest.

The case manager also:

- Seeks the advice of colleagues and supervisors whenever such consultation is in the client's best interest
- Establishes and maintains professional boundaries
- Exercises professional judgment and prudence in selecting and recommending services
- Terminates client services when no longer needed by or helpful to the client
- Promptly notifies the client when services are anticipated to be interrupted or terminated
- Makes necessary and client authorized transfer or referral if the client still needs such service to ensure continuity of care

STANDARD 3: The case manager shall ensure that clients are involved in all phases of client-centered case management practice to the greatest extent possible.

Interpretation: The case manager and client share responsibility for selected client-centered case management tasks, thus maximizing client involvement in decision making and problem solving. The case manager's role is to assist the clients with decisions by giving them all known options. During this time, it is important for the case manager to provide support to the client and family. The case manager always considers the client's best interest regardless of who is legally responsible for the client.

STANDARD 4: The case manager shall ensure the client's right to privacy and ensure appropriate confidentiality when information about the client is released to others.

Interpretation: All information received from a client or about a client must be absolutely kept confidential. A release signed by the client or the client's legal guardian enables the case

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manager to release information to obtain services. All this is done with the client's knowledge of what is being released, to whom, and the reason. At that time, the case manager tells the client again orally about confidentiality. Files are kept in a secure limited-access area and made available only to those who need access. The case manager interviews clients privately and offers them the opportunity to be interviewed alone as a home visit, in the case manager's private office, or in a mutually agreed upon community/public location as safety dictates.

STANDARD 5: The case manager shall intervene at the client level to provide and/or coordinate delivery of direct services to clients and their families.

Interpretation: Client-centered case management consists of the following components that define service to clients.

- Outreach
- Psychosocial and functional assessment
- Service plan development
- Plan implementation
- Case consultation when appropriate
- Coordination
- Monitoring and recording of services
- Client advocacy for obtaining needed resources
- Reassessment of client status
- Termination when goals are met

Service delivery is guided by obtaining a comprehensive understanding of the unique strengths, challenges, and needs of each client. The case manager consults appropriate fellow professionals to assist in the provision of medical, psychosocial, domestic assistance, and financial guidance for clients, as appropriate. The client and, when the client so chooses, family members and/or significant individuals, are involved as much as possible.

STANDARD 6: The case manager shall improve access to needed services.

Interpretation: The case manager identifies community resources appropriate for each client. When a resource does not exist, the case manager advocates for the establishment of services.

STANDARD 7: The case manager shall be knowledgeable about resource availability, service costs, and budgetary parameters and be fiscally responsible in carrying out client-centered case management functions and activities.

Interpretation: Client-centered case management practice occurs within parameters imposed by the program and agency. As such, the case manager maintains client focus and simultaneously allocates service resources and provides critical feedback regarding program, agency, and delivery system performance. Thus, the case manager is responsible both for delivering appropriate services to the client and for carefully managing financial resources.

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Case managers fully disclose the following to clients: available and non-available resources; required co-payments and cost sharing; time limits on service provision; timing and frequency of required reassessments; and appropriateness and fiscal effects of treatment choices.

STANDARD 8: The case manager shall participate in evaluative and quality assurance activities designed to monitor appropriateness and effectiveness of both service delivery system and client-centered case management.

Interpretation: The quality, effectiveness, and appropriateness of client-centered case management services are regularly reviewed, evaluated, and ensured using established criteria and standards. Such criteria and standards relate to indicators of need for services and effectiveness of required interventions. Contracted providers are reviewed and evaluated in the same manner. Appropriate client feedback is sought on services they have received, and that feedback is incorporated in this process. The review and evaluation of client-centered case management services are documented and include feedback and implementation of corrective measures, when necessary.

STANDARD 9: The case manager shall carry a reasonable caseload that allows time to effectively plan, provide, and evaluate client-centered case management tasks related to client and system interventions.

Interpretation: The agency establishes policies and develops systems governing reasonable workloads and caseloads for case managers. A number of variables affect caseload size. Caseload standards are based on the scope of professional responsibilities, the volume of clients to be served, the amount of time case managers need to spend with clients, the breadth and complexity of client problems or services, and the length and duration of case mix in determining case manager/client involvement. The number of cases a case manager can realistically handle is affected by the degree to which caseloads consist of acute, high-risk, or multi-need clients.

Caseload size realistically allows for meaningful opportunities for face-to-face client contacts. As caseload size increases, a case manager has decreasing time to perform ongoing client-centered case management activities such as follow-up, monitoring, and reassessment. The agency and the case manager have a joint responsibility to address and remedy caseload issues and concerns.

STANDARD 10: The case manager shall treat colleagues with courtesy and strive to enhance inter-professional, intra-professional, and interagency cooperation on behalf of the client.

Interpretation: Client-centered case management requires well-coordinated and effective interdisciplinary efforts if client needs are to be served. Interpersonal relationships are characterized by a spirit of respect and caring that is critical to the case manager–client relationship. Also, respectful treatment of colleagues is a prerequisite for effective communication and cooperation among professionals from different disciplines.

For additional information and further interpretation, consult the NASW Website at www.socialworkers.org.