WIA Case Notes Guidelines

WIA customer files contain case notes that describe the plans, activities, actions and results related to their services. They are a planning tool, and a source of documentation and information that can be used by case managers, supervisors and monitors. WIA files can be chosen for review by a number of entities such as the Workforce Development Council, the US Department of Labor, Washington State Employment Security Department and others; therefore, accuracy and completeness in case notes are very important. The following recommendations are the result of program monitoring activities at the local and state levels.

Case notes should tell the “who, what, where, when, and why” of the customer’s needs and services.

Case notes describe the actions taken and the reasons behind those actions, along with the expected results. Consider case notes as the means to tell a factual story of the customer. **No opinions or comments of the case manager should be included.** Anyone should be able to pick up the customer file and follow the story of what is happening with the customer.

Case notes should:

1. Include the date of entry and name of the case manager or other staff person.

2. Be written in a timely manner; write case notes while the information is fresh in your mind.

3. Document activities such as eligibility determination, registration and the development of service plans. Case notes should give a history of the customer’s situation, barriers, and services planned and/or received. They should describe how the customer will benefit from WIA services.

4. Describe assessments used and an analysis of the results of those assessments,

5. Document active services by describing the services, the planned end date and the expected results.

6. Tell who initiated the contact and where the contact took place. Show frequency of customer contact. If there has been a lack of regular customer contact, document why.

7. Follow some sequence. An issue mentioned in one case note should be followed-up with other case notes. It should be clear if a problem was resolved, if the customer received a service, if the problem has worsened, etc. If a problem remains, the case notes should identify a plan of action/resolution.

8. Be concise and highlight major events, crises, barriers, etc. Anything that is pertinent to the customer continuing the program (e.g. job search or training) or continuing to receive services should be listed.

9. For Supportive Services, case notes must document needs, resources explored and actions taken.

10. For Training Services document the resources explored, expected results and the WIA planned contributions. Document attendance, progress and credentials earned.

11. For Job Search activities document services, job referrals and other activities.

12. For Follow up services describe what was done and the planned next steps. Document post-exit credentials and employment information.

13. Include any supporting documentation that is needed (e.g. a copy of a training certificate).

14. Document the rationale for any change in the customer's service plan (e.g. customer has moved, customer lost job, customer's work schedule has changed), how the decision was made (e.g. met with customer and customer's TANF case manager to develop new job search plan), and what the new service plan is.

15. Be kept in the case file - if case notes are maintained in a database, print them regularly and keep an updated copy in the customer's file. Case files should be maintained in a locked file cabinet.

16. Case notes that refer to medical information and/or needed accommodations should be kept in a separate file that is stored in a locked file cabinet.

Common Case Note Issues

Use of non-specific and misleading wording:

Poor: Joan seemed to be distracted and obviously nervous.

Good: Joan was shifting in her seat and chipped at her nail polish during the meeting.

Use of judgmental language:

Poor: She looks and smells like she hasn't bathed in days. She just sat there when I asked questions regarding her work history. She seems lazy.

Good: She has poor hygiene, did not make eye contact nor would she respond to questions.

Diagnosing:

Poor: John has a bad attitude lately. I think he is using drugs again.

Good: John's math teacher indicated he has been tardy to class 4 days in a row this week and fell asleep in class today. When asked if he was sick, John told his math teacher to "Mind his own business". I have set an appointment with John for tomorrow morning.

Opinion:

Poor: Met with Sarah and her parents this morning. She is a great kid! She will do great in our program!

Good: Had initial meeting with Sarah and her parents this morning. Sarah was attentive during the meeting, and had all required paperwork complete. Sarah indicated a strong desire to graduate on time and created three education goals for this semester.