CASE NOTES PROCEDURE

Procedure Number: 2080 **Effective Date:** May 1, 2017

Case notes describe the actions taken and the reasons behind those actions, along with the expected results. For enrolled job seekers, case notes track progress toward the goals and activities in the job seeker's service plan. Job seeker electronic files containing case notes may be reviewed by a number of entities, including but not limited to Workforce Snohomish, the US Department of Labor, Washington State Employment Security Department, WorkSource partners, and others; accuracy, completeness, and appropriateness of comments made in case notes are very important.

All Case Notes must be relevant, objective and based on fact. No opinions or miscellaneous comments should be included in case notes.

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.

Case notes must document the reason for denial of any service(s) for which the participant is eligible and that are allowable under all applicable Federal, State, and local law as well as associated regulations, provisions, and written policy.

Case notes must document that each enrolled job seeker has been screened for priority of services and whether priority of services must be provided to the job seeker.

Case notes must be used to document activities such as eligibility determination, registration, the development of service plans, assessments administered to the job seeker and the results of those assessments, services - including the date of service the planned end date (if applicable) and the expected results - and changes in the service plan including the reasons for change (e.g. job seeker has moved), how the decision was made (e.g. met with job seeker and his TANF case manager to develop new job search plan), and any new services.

Generally, case notes should

- Be written in a timely manner; while the information is fresh.
- Follow a 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 job seeker received a service, if the problem has worsened, etc. If a problem remains, the case notes should identify a plan of action/resolution.
- Be concise and highlight major events, crises, completions, etc. Anything that is pertinent to the customer continuing progress should be listed.
- Include or reference the location of any supporting documentation that is needed (e.g. a copy of a training certificate).
- Follow the "SAR" method: Situation, Action, Result. Not every case note will have a situation, action, and result, but, as a whole, the case notes should all fit into a story with a beginning, middle, and end.

  - **Situation:** The Who, What, Where, When, Why, and/or How of the need for the service being provided.

    Example: "Joey Jobseeker has an interview on 3.3.2017 and is in need of Support Services to purchase a shirt, tie, and pants.

  - **Action:** The Who, What, Where, When, Why, and/or How of the steps taken to address the "situation".

    Example: "No other sources available. Requesting Support Services in the amount of 75 dollars through Dislocated Worker funding to assist Joey Jobseeker with the purchase of proper interview attire.

  - **Result:** The Who, What, Where, When, Why, and/or How of the outcome of the "Action".

    Example: $75 in Dislocated Worker Support Services funds approved for Joey Jobseeker on 2/27/2017.

    Joey Jobseeker received voucher on 2/28/2017.

    Joey Jobseeker purchased interview clothes, and returned receipt for final total of $62.50.

Introductory case notes should document ***that the job seeker has been screened for priority of services and whether such priority should be provided,*** employment goals and the needs of the job seeker. Information from intake, interviews, and the objective assessment can be woven together to discuss participant needs and the proposed service plan to achieve the employment goal. The case notes should give a clear picture of the job seeker's goals, needs, barriers, strengths and skills, and possible future support services, training, work-based learning or work experiences needed to achieve employment goals.

Case note guidelines for specific services

- **For Supportive Services**, case notes must document needs, resources explored, the absence of other sources to cover these costs if WIOA resources will be used, the total amount requested, a final amount spent, and a clear notation of the funding source used. Support Services case notes should have at least three inputs:
  1. Request (situation) including the need reflected on the service plan, resources explored and amount requested.
  2. Approval (action) with the amount approved and funding source.
  3. Result including final amount used.

- **For Training Services (including occupational skills training and work-based training),** case notes must document the resources explored; the absence of other sources to cover these costs if training services will be funded with WIOA dollars; how the training will lead to job seeker self-sufficiency; expected results; the WIOA planned contributions and specific source; the job seeker's attendance, progress and credentials earned; and the final amount spent if different than the expected amount. Case notes must line up with the Personal Training Account (PTA).

- **For Job Search Activities** case notes must document services, job referrals and other activities.

- **For Follow up Services** case notes must describe what was done and the planned next steps. Post-exit credentials and employment information must be documented in case notes. Case notes documenting Supportive Services provided to youth during the follow up period, must record such services a Supportive Services as per the PTA Supportive Services Procedure.

Common Case Note Issues to Avoid

- 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.
- Use of jargon or acronyms (other than those on the approved local acronym list)
  - Poor: John is doing OK in T5 WEX in the RR.
  - Good: John has demonstrated strong customer service skills while staffing the resource room as part of a work experience funded by Title V (AARP).

References:

- Workforce Snohomish Acronym List