

Silberman School of Social Work

Session 13:

Case Closure

The Intricacies of Case Termination

How to know when to close a case; Engage family in post-services planning

Read:

https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/fam_engagement.pdf

Read:

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/cps2018.pdf> (Chapter 11)

Standards for Social Work Case Management

Standard 1. Ethics and Values

The social work case manager shall adhere to and promote the ethics and values of the social work profession, using the NASW Code of Ethics as a guide to ethical decision making in case management practice.

Standard 2. Qualifications

The social work case manager shall possess a baccalaureate or advanced degree in social work from a school or program accredited by the Council on Social Work Education; shall comply with the licensing and certification requirements of the state(s) or jurisdiction(s) in which she or he practices; and shall possess the skills and professional experience necessary to practice social work case management.

Standards for Social Work Case Management

Standard 3. Knowledge

The social work case manager shall acquire and maintain knowledge of current theory, evidence-informed practice, sociohistorical context, policy, research, and evaluation methods relevant to case management and the population served, and shall use such information to ensure the quality of case management practice.

Standard 4. Cultural and Linguistic Competence

The social work case manager shall provide and facilitate access to culturally and linguistically appropriate services, consistent with the NASW Indicators for the Achievement of the NASW Standards for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice.

Standards for Social Work Case Management

Standard 5. Assessment

The social work case manager shall engage clients—and, when appropriate, other members of client systems—in an ongoing information-gathering and decision-making process to help clients identify their goals, strengths, and challenges.

Standard 6. Service Planning, Implementation, and Monitoring

The social work case manager shall collaborate with clients to plan, implement, monitor, and amend individualized services that promote clients' strengths, advance clients' well-being, and help clients achieve their goals. Case management service plans shall be based on meaningful assessments and shall have specific, attainable, measurable objectives.

Standards for Social Work Case Management

Standard 7. Advocacy and Leadership

The social work case manager shall advocate for the rights, decisions, strengths, and needs of clients and shall promote clients' access to resources, supports, and services.

Standard 8. Interdisciplinary and Interorganizational Collaboration

The social work case manager shall promote collaboration among colleagues and organizations to enhance service delivery and facilitate client goal attainment.

Standards for Social Work Case Management

Standard 9. Practice Evaluation and Improvement

The social work case manager shall participate in ongoing, formal evaluation of her or his practice to advance client well-being, assess the appropriateness and effectiveness of services and supports, ensure competence, and improve practice.

Standard 10. Record Keeping

The social work case manager shall document all case management activities in the appropriate client record in a timely manner. Social work documentation shall be recorded on paper or electronically and shall be prepared, completed, secured, maintained, and disclosed in accordance with regulatory, legislative, statutory, and organizational requirements.

Standards for Social Work Case Management

Standard 11. Workload Sustainability

The social work case manager shall responsibly advocate for a caseload and scope of work that permit high-quality planning, provision, and evaluation of case management services.

Standard 12. Professional Development and Competence

The social work case manager shall assume personal responsibility for her or his professional development and competence in accordance with the NASW Code of Ethics, the NASW Standards for Continuing Professional Education, and the licensure or certification requirements of the state(s) or jurisdiction(s) in which the social worker practices.

Why is Discussion Regarding the Termination of the Professional Relationship Important?

Informed consent is defined as a “Voluntary agreement reached by a capable client based on information about foreseeable risks and benefits associated with the agreement (e.g., participation in counselling or agreement to disclose social work report to a third party)” (Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW), 2005, p. 10). The informed consent process is integral to the social worker- client relationship and is in keeping with the ethical principles of self-determination, autonomy, and respect.

Definition of Termination

Termination is defined as:

The conclusion of the social worker-client intervention process; a systematic procedure for disengaging the working relationship. It occurs when goals are reached, when the specified time for working has ended, or when the client is no longer interested in continuing

Good Endings

Good quality endings of social work intervention and closing of cases is equally as important as the way in which relationships are built at the beginning of any intervention. If a case is closed in a planned manner then this lays a good base for if there needs to be any involvement in the future.

Discussion of case closure should begin during the assessment phase and continue to case closure.

The decision to terminate services is based on a thorough evaluation of the family situation.

Prior to termination the case worker shall:
Discuss the treatment plan progress with the family members; and

Confer with the supervisor to review case progress.

Risk factors must be thoroughly assessed at this time.
A joint decision should be made to close the case.

Prepare families for a formal closing process and termination of services should be a planned with the family.

A final updated version of all paperwork including a closing case document should be filed.

Family Refusal of Services

The caseworker and supervisor must jointly assess the risk to the child(ren) when a family refuses services. If it is determined that the child(ren) is in danger, legal intervention is needed and an immediate referral to the juvenile office is required. If there is not sufficient cause to pursue legal intervention, after supervisory consultation, the case will be closed. The Caseworker must thoroughly document the reasons for closure and any existing concerns in the case record.

For the most part, child protective services (CPS) case closures will be one of four types:

Termination. If all of the outcomes have been achieved, or if the family feels unready or unwilling to work toward those outcomes, and there is sufficient reason to believe that the child is safe (even though there may still be some risk of maltreatment), then the caseworker may agree that ending the relationship with the family is appropriate. This also means that the family will not move on to work with other service providers.

For the most part, child protective services (CPS) case closures will be one of four types:

Referral. If the family is able or willing to continue to work with other service providers toward some or all of the outcomes that have not yet been accomplished, then the caseworker will work with the family to identify other strategies to support the work. This may include referral to other agencies or providers, or it may include the identification of such informal supports as family or friends who will encourage and guide them.

For the most part, child protective services (CPS) case closures will be one of four types:

Transfer. If the caseworker's time with the family is ending, but they will work with another caseworker in the agency, then the ending work with the family will, in part, focus on developing a relationship with the new caseworker. If the caseworker had developed a positive relationship with the family, it is desirable that both the current and new caseworker have at least one joint session to introduce the colleague to the client.

For the most part, child protective services (CPS) case closures will be one of four types:

Discontinuation by family. If the family is receiving voluntary services and makes a unilateral decision to end their relationship with the agency, this decision may be communicated behaviorally. For example, family members may gradually or suddenly stop keeping scheduled appointments and not respond to outreach attempts to reconnect. The caseworker must consult with the supervisor to examine the agency's response. Discontinuation by the family is the least desirable type of case closing, but likely to happen some of the time. The family, however, cannot legally discontinue services if the court mandates the service.

PROCESS OF CASE CLOSURE

In some cases, it may be appropriate to convene a team meeting to review the family's progress in relation to the assessment, case plan, and service agreement(s) prior to case closure.

When the court is involved in a case that is being closed, the court must approve case closure as well as terminate any existing court orders. Depending on the jurisdiction, this may involve written notification to the court or a hearing.

Caseworkers should take the following steps in terminating services:

Review risk reduction.

Talk with the family about the specific accomplishments, emphasizing the positive change in behaviors and conditions.

Caseworkers should take the following steps in terminating services:

Review tasks completed.

Discuss any obstacles encountered and focus on the successes and knowledge obtained.

Caseworkers should take the following steps in terminating services:

Review general steps in problem solving.

Remind families of the strides made as well as the methods they can use when future problems arise.

Caseworkers should take the following steps in terminating services:

Consider any remaining needs or concerns.

Help family members plan how to maintain the changes.

Discuss any potential obstacles they may encounter as well as strategies for overcoming them.

Some practical steps to involve the family include:

- Meeting with the family to discuss the case closure;
- Anticipating a family-created crisis that may occur as a reaction to independence resulting from the planned closure;
- Reviewing the progress made as a result of social work involvement;
- Referring the family to any additional resources needed;
- Leaving the door open for services should they be needed in the future, including providing appropriate contact information.

Vignette 1 - Maria:

Maria has been working with you from the first day of field instruction in her high school. From the first day you spoke to her about your role as an intern and how you and she would work together until early May when your field placement would come to an end.

When you start to talk to her about termination – she acts like you never told her and begins to cry unconsolably.

How do you proceed?

Vignette 2 - Xavier:

Xavier has been working with you from the first day of field instruction in his youth drop in center. You spoke to him on several occasions about your role as an intern and how you and he would work together until your field placement would come to an end.

When you bring this up in your second to last session, Xavier completely acts like he has not heard you and refuses to discuss it when you press him.

How do you proceed?

Vignette 3 - Nancy:

Nancy has been working with you for the past six weeks from the first day of field instruction in his youth drop in center. You have a good relationship but when you bring up termination in your second to last session, Nancy becomes very angry and storms out of your office saying – You are just like all the rest of them – everyone leaves me – I hate you fucking social workers!

How do you proceed?

Vignette 4 - Fabio:

Fabio has been working with you for a year. He is the ideal client in your opinion, always on time, very thoughtful. You look forward to working with him. When you bring up termination in your second to last session, Fabio expresses his appreciation for the work you did together and you feel emotional. He seems fine, but you are a mess

How do you proceed?

Questions?

Next week Working with Adolescents