

Case Noting Style Guidance and Best Practice

March 2015

Purpose:

To share the required elements for case note types and provide some guidance for best practice. This guidance suggests some style and formatting strategies for staff to use in their day-to-day work. Helpful links to the information center are included with the various casenote types if applicable. Some elements included in certain types of case notes are required fields in the IRIS system. Information contained in this guidance is intended to reflect information that should be included in narrative case notes.

Rationale:

Case noting is an important required task for DVR staff. It is used for the purposes of documentation and tracking decision-making. Case notes should tell the story of the case and reflect the "voice" of the consumer. Case notes should also reflect the choices that DVR consumers and staff make at different stages of the process. Since informed choice is an important part of the DVR philosophy and practice, case notes often reflect the choices made by consumers and information provided to them by DVR staff.

General Reminders

Length

- Be as brief as possible.
- Provide only necessary information.
- Summarize information and email communication.
- Use short sentences.
- Use lists, bullets.
- Document decisions, timeframes and outcomes.

Timeliness

- Enter message as soon after the event as possible.

Language and Tone

- Use proper names.
- Document actions of the individual in an objective fashion without attaching values.
- Reflect the consumer's perspective.
- Write in the first person, which encourages full participation of consumers and informed choice throughout the process.

Case Note Types:

- [Eligibility](#)
- [OOS](#)
- [IPE](#)
- [IPE Review and Amendment](#)
- [General Case Note/Progress/Meetings](#)
- [Purchase Authorization](#)
- [Closure](#)

Eligibility

The eligibility case note is intended to provide the how and why of the determination.

Information Center Link: http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr/info_ctr/elig/default.htm

What to Include in the Case Note:

For Consumers who receive SSI or SSDI (presumed eligibility):

- Information on if the consumer is interested in work.
- Use the preset case note defaults to do the case note/eligibility decision as soon as the above has been verified.

For All DVR Consumers:

- A description of the efforts made to process the application in 30 days.
- Information on possible DVR services needed to help the consumer.
- Information on the documentation received used to verify the consumer's disability issues (attach in IRIS). This includes DVR staff observation/professional judgment, disability records and authorized DVR assessments.
- If referencing information that is already attached or included in other case notes, a reference to the other information is helpful.
- Documentation that the consumer was informed of the decision in writing and/or through their preferred method of communication.
- Documentation that the consumer's rights and CAP information was shared with the consumer.

For Consumer if not found eligible:

- Specific information on why the consumer was not found eligible (no disability, no impediment, does not require services, etc.) and what information was used to make that determination.
- Information that full consultation was provided to the consumer prior to the ineligibility decision.
- Documentation on other employment resources was shared with the consumer (i.e. Job Center, other programs) including the specific program(s).
- Documentation that the consumer's rights and CAP information was shared with the consumer.

OOS

The OOS casenote is intended to reflect how the VRC arrived at the OOS category determination. The casenote should explain how the VRC, jointly with each consumer, evaluated the consumer's functional limitations and anticipated scope of services in the Order of Selection determination.

Information Center Link: http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr/info_ctr/elig/default.htm

What to Include in the Case Note:

- A detailed description under the related functional limitation identified about how the disability impacts the consumer.
- Summary statement of disability and that information from the consumer was used to make OOS determination.
- Consumer was notified of decision in writing and supplemented by preferred method of contact as necessary.
- Consumer was provided referral information to Job Center and Job Center of Wisconsin and other resources per OOS letter.
- If a consumer is presumed eligible due to receipt of social security benefits.
- Documentation that the consumer's rights and CAP information was shared with the consumer.

IPE

The case note should identify plan development discussion, explain how the IPE goal was determined and demonstrate the consumer's role in the decision-making of other plan elements.

Information Center Link: http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr/info_ctr/ipe/default.htm

What to Include in the Case Note:

- Disability and functional limitations to be included and addressed in the IPE.
- Other barriers to employment that need to be addressed in the IPE.
- There should be clear documentation reflecting the involvement of the consumer in identifying elements of the IPE including progress measures and other responsibilities.
- Information if the consumer is considering more than one employment goal or would consider a different type of employment than what is identified in the IPE.
- Information about how labor market information was used to assist in the identification of the employment goal.
- How the contact standard timeframe was determined and how the consumer and DVR will maintain contact.
- If assessments are included in the IPE, explain how the assessments will be used to further modify or inform the IPE goal or other service components.
- If the services are to be completed incrementally, explain how progress will be determined and used to make changes to the IPE.
- The great eight should be documented to the extent possible to reflect the consumer voice and involvement with employment goal, the services, timing of services and service provider selection.

The Great Eight:

- Strengths
- Resources
- Priorities
- Concerns
- Abilities
- Capabilities
- Career interests
- Informed choice

Plan types that require additional case note documentation:

Supported Employment

- Identify the source of extended services post DVR to the extent possible.
- Explain how the weekly number of hours have been decided and how services will be coordinated at the point of transition to extended services.

Transition

- Explain how services have been coordinated with the high school IEP.
- The DVR IPE was completed before the student left high school.
- How pre-employment transition services will be addressed in the IPE. (Counseling and job exploration, work-based learning experiences, counseling on transition and/or postsecondary education workplace readiness training and self-advocacy.)

Self-Employment

- Green light; Explain where the consumer is in the process and why self-employment in the specific occupation has been selected. If there are skill or educational steps that need to be completed, explain that a dual track IPE has been developed.
- Yellow light; explain how and why the individual will continue to explore if they are suited for self-employment as well as the specific occupation.

Restoration

- Explain how will the restoration impact the IPE goal and services.
- Include treatment schedule and progress measures.
- How funding of the service has been determined.
- Search for comparable benefits.
- Planning of ongoing services post DVR involvement.

IPE Review and Amendment

The case note should identify the review discussion and explain if a change is necessary to the IPE. It should document why the change is necessary and how it relates to achievement of the employment goal. The case note should also detail how the consumer and counselor agreed to a substantive change in the IPE.

What to Include in the Case Note:

- Review - Identify if there are no changes.
- That there was a review of the Consumer Fiscal Responsibilities Agreement Form and signature collected.
- Identify the change (If needed).
- Identify why the change is necessary to achieve the IPE goal.
- Speak to progress made and timelines.
- Substantive changes include:
 - Employment outcome,
 - VR services to be provided, or,
 - Providers of the services.

General Case Note/Progress/Meetings

These case notes are the most common and are intended to show day-to-day decision-making done in a case, information used for decisions and how a consumer is involved and progressing through the VR process.

- When entering in a general case note it is important that the following is noted:
 - Type of contact (telephone, in person, via email) – **Where / When**
 - Purpose for the contact – **Why / What**
 - **Who** was involved (who was present during a meeting)
 - Next steps in the rehab process – **Why / What / Who**
 - Document actions and behaviors if relevant to meeting content or next steps
- Do provide concise information that is relevant to the content of the meeting or next step in the rehab story.
- Provide a description of how Counseling may be been provided.
- Do provide a description of what the consumer wishes as the outcome of the meeting or any decisions made.
- Refrain from copying emails into case notes. Please summarize activities as necessary.
- Quote dialogue only when relevant and necessary. (Only quote what you can be accurately reflected.)

Purchase Authorization

The purchase authorization consists of a group of comments related to a purchase of one or several services.

Information contained within the authorization should include:

1. Prior Authorization (purchase authorized before initiated).
2. What is the service or item and time period?
3. Why is it necessary and appropriate?
4. Cost Determination ([Rate of Payment Determination & Required Documentation](#)).
5. Are comparable benefits used and if applicable, why not?

Closure

Closure case notes are intended to show how and why a case is being closed.

Information Center Link: http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr/info_ctr/closure/default.htm

What to Include in the Case Note:

Closure Prior to Eligibility:

- How it has been determined a consumer is unavailable during an extended period to complete an assessment for determining eligibility.
- How and when multiple attempts using multiple methods, including the person's preferred mode of contact, to contact the consumer or, as appropriate, the consumer's representative to encourage participation were made.
- Discuss what notification was provided to the consumer regarding the closure.

Closure Due to Ineligibility:

- That the consumer or, if appropriate, the consumer's representative was provided an opportunity for a full consultation of an ineligibility decision before the consumer's case is closed due to ineligibility.
- Document explanation of reason for ineligibility.
- How and when multiple attempts and multiple methods including the consumer's preferred mode of contact was used to contact the consumer.
- What referral services the consumer was offered.
- Discuss what notification was provided to the consumer regarding the closure.

Closure After Eligibility:

- Explain why the case is being closed.
- Document if it has not been possible to develop a plan for employment and why.
- Specifically how or why the consumer is not able to participate.
- The consumer or, if appropriate, the consumer's representative was provided an opportunity to discuss the closure decision before closure.
- How and when multiple attempts and multiple methods, including the consumer's preferred mode of contact, were used to contact the consumer.
- Discuss what notification was provided to the consumer regarding the closure.
- After an IPE has been initiated-Why VR services are no longer necessary or appropriate, and/or, how and why consumer does not achieve satisfactory progress in a plan for employment.
- Documentation that UI wages have been checked prior to closure.

Successful Case Closure:

- How services provided under a plan for employment have contributed to the achievement of the employment outcome.
- How the achieved the employment outcome is the same as described in the IPE.
- Document how the employment outcome is consistent with the consumer's strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests and informed choice.
- How we know the employment outcome is in the most integrated setting possible, consistent with the consumer's informed choice.
- Method used by DVR to verify (independent from provider reporting) that the consumer is compensated at or above the minimum wage and receives at least the customary wage and benefit level paid to other individuals performing similar work for the same employer.
- Consumer has maintained employment for at least 90 days.
- The consumer and VR Counselor employed by DVR consider the employment to be satisfactory and agree the consumer is performing well on the job.
- The consumer or, if appropriate, the consumer's representative was provided an opportunity to discuss the closure decision before closure.
- Contact with the consumer to verify that the employment is stable, and the consumer no longer requires VR services to maintain the employment.
- Discuss what notification was provided to the consumer regarding the closure.