

BEST PRACTICES FOR DOCUMENTING CHILD PROTECTION CASES

All child protection cases must be documented in writing to provide a comprehensive record of professional interactions and services provided to children.

Specifically, caseworkers should abide by the following guidelines:

Documenting actions and services provided

- For each child identified for case management services, an individual case file should be opened.
- Individual files should be regularly updated and reflect changes in the life of the child as well as services being provided.
- **Each** phone call, home visit, referral, and other **action** taken on behalf of the child and their family should be **documented**, in the child's case file. Some agencies might choose to use a **Case Notes** form for this purpose.
- Wherever possible, standard forms should be used across agencies to document cases. T
- Minimum documentation in each case file should include: Registration Form, Best Interests Assessment Forms, Case Notes Form, Referral Forms, BID Report (where appropriate), Family Tracing results (where appropriate), and other related reports from service providers.
- All caseworkers and staff involved in handling cases should respect confidentiality and ensure that case files are securely stored to maintain the privacy and safety of children and their families.

Writing Style

- All forms completed by the caseworker should be **factual, objective** and **non-judgmental**.
For example, do not write: ~~Child is selfish and lazy—won't to help with household chores.~~ Instead you write: *Child is withdrawn from family and does not participate in regular activities like helping with household chores or eating dinner together.*
- Caseworker notes should provide details that **describe the situation in detail**
For example, do not write: ~~Child's tent is dirty and unhygienic to live in.~~ Instead write: *Child's tent is not winterized, the entry door does not close properly, and there were leaves and trash on the floor.*
- Caseworkers should **include observations not personal opinions**. Observations are *things you can see, smell, hear, count or measure*.
For example, do not write: *Child appears to be hyperactive.* Instead write: *Child cannot sit still, has a hard time paying attention during our conversations, and gets up to do other activities in the middle of an interview.*
- **Give sufficient evidence** – not just hearsay from one person. This means including: Where you got your information from, Whether it is backed up by anything else, How many times you witnessed a situation, and How many people reported the concern
- **Confidential**: Do not include names of children or family members in case notes form. Instead list people according to their relationship with the child (e.g. mother, father, female caregiver, older brother, etc.)
- Case notes, assessment forms, and other documents should **include list of those present in meetings and names, positions, organizations and contact information for all service providers.**

- Case notes should be **organized by subject or issue** (e.g. school, safety, health) rather than a long list of issues. Analysis and next steps can be included at the end.