



## Guidelines for Case Records

Programs are often required to maintain case records or “charts” that document the work with all individuals who are receiving support or are designated to receive services. Case records are useful tools for recording and transmitting information and for documenting progress toward goals.

Requirements vary regarding the amount and type of information that must be documented and how frequently progress notes and service plans should be recorded. Most important, however, is that case records remain current. Programs may also choose or be required to keep track of prescribed medications, physicals, hospitalizations, and collateral contacts with other community services. Computerized recordkeeping systems lessen the burden of updating and storing paper records, and they can provide the service organization with comprehensive information about service utilization.

### **Documentation is important for many reasons:**

- Records help with planning and monitoring progress toward goals
- A well-organized record keeping system provides quick access to important information
- Writing progress notes and service plans can help staff to think more clearly about the work that is being done
- Records assist with continuity of service when there is a change in staff
- Supervisors can use records as a tool to monitor and support the work of staff members
- Records can document accomplishments and areas that need improvement
- Records can reveal patterns of effective and ineffective interventions and support
- Records can serve to document that regulatory requirements and agency policies are being met

To release or receive tenant information to or from other organizations requires permission and signed consent from the tenant. Programs are expected to operate in accordance with federal, state, and local guidelines and statutes for sharing confidential information. Failure to adequately protect the privacy of medical, psychiatric, and substance use treatment and other confidential information is a breach of professional ethics and can be subject to legal action.

While the extensiveness of case records varies widely with the composition of the tenancy and funder requirements, the following is a sample format with recommendations for the frequency of recording.

### **Identifying information**

- Face sheet with emergency contacts (updated yearly or as circumstances change)

### **Consent forms/Release of information**

- Consent forms (updated every six months or document attempts to obtain signature)

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Note: This document is included within the *Supportive Services* section of CSH's *Toolkit for Developing and Operating Supportive Housing*, which is available at [www.csh.org/toolkit2](http://www.csh.org/toolkit2). This document has been adapted from the CSH's publication *Developing the "Support" in Supportive Housing*, which is available at [www.csh.org/publications](http://www.csh.org/publications).

**Assessments**

- Psychosocial assessment (within first month and annually thereafter)
- Mental status exam
- Substance-use assessment

**Service plan**

- Comprehensive individual service plan (within first month)
- Service plan review (updated every six months)

**Progress notes (usually weekly to monthly)**

- Notes reflect progress relative to service plan goals and objectives
- Records date, purpose, signature, and title of worker, setting of service, and any collaterals contacted

**Documentation of service participation**

- Identifies types of activities used (updated monthly)
- Summarizes attendance at activities and contacts with service staff (updated monthly)
- Documents community-based services used with contact name, address, and phone number

**Medical, mental health, and substance use**

- General health assessment, including notes on changes in health status
- Medical documents and exams (updated annually)
- Medication regimen forms (updated as medications change)
- Monthly medication log (when medications are monitored)
- Mental health and substance-abuse treatment records

**Vocational/Educational**

- Vocational assessment
- Career plans
- Employment and educational history
- Military records

**Income**

- Current income verification (updated annually or with changes in income)
- Entitlements and other benefits received

**Miscellaneous**

- Incident reports, critical events (such as arrests), discharge summaries, important correspondence, and rent arrears notices