Case Noting Guidelines

1. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide the Inala Community House (ICH) Family Intervention Services (FIS) workers with guidance about how to write and record case notes relating to their work with service users.

2. Scope

These Guidelines apply to all employees, contractors, students and volunteers within ICH FIS. For the purpose of this procedure, these persons shall be referred to as workers.

3. Definitions

Child is an individual under 18 years (*Child Protection Act 1999*).

The Department refers to the Queensland Government Department responsible for Family Services programs and/or Child Protection or Child Safety.

Service User is any parents or family, or carer named in the referral for whom services will be provided, including children.

SRS is the record management system where all case related information is stored.

FIS SRS Profile is opened and maintained during the period of intervention with a service user for the purposes of recording all client related information.

4. Guidelines

Case notes are an integral and important part of practice in ICH FIS. They provide an accurate record of the work that has been done with service users and contribute to future decision making and ongoing casework that impacts service user outcomes.

Case notes also enable ICH FIS to demonstrate accountability, and meet contractual and legal responsibilities. Case records can be subpoenaed as court documents so they must be impartial, current, accurate and complete.

4.1. Best practice principles

Case notes are to be completed within two business days of the event occurring to ensure accurate recording of content and hours. If the case note is being written after the event date, it must be backdated using the calendar/date function.

Case notes should be written as a summary, supplemented with direct quotes and observations.

Case notes should:
- Provide clear information about the work/activity undertaken with the service user
- Provide details about other parties or services who were part of the work/activity

- Ideally, demonstrate how the work/activity aligns with the service users goals, which then can be used to inform the development of progress reports (refer to ICH FIS Monitoring and Intervention Procedure) and the review of Family Action Plans.
- Document the service user's strengths and progress, as well as current concerns/worries
- Clearly note if there is an action or no action required.

ICH FIS workers should take particular care when writing case notes given the content will be read by others and can be highly sensitive. At all times, written language needs to be professional and respectful, and should be:
- Written in third person and refer to ICH FIS workers as 'worker' or 'CW'
- Free from derogatory or emotive language
- Objective and factual
- Qualified with context/background information, observations and theory/research where subjective opinions or worker assessments are stated
- Provide sufficient context so a person not familiar with the case understands what has happened, and the key stakeholders involved.

ICH FIS workers must also use domestic violence informed language that reflects the principles of the 'Safe and Together model'. Language should focus on perpetrator accountability and be clear and specific about who is responsible for the behaviour. It should also be specific about what the behaviour is (linking this to any identified patterns of behaviour) and the impact it has on the adult victim and children. Case notes should also highlight the strengths of the victim survivor in keeping themselves and their children safe. Refer to the Department's documents on the Safe and Together model for further information.

4.2. Recording case notes

If there are multiple ICH FIS workers involved in a meeting/consult/visit, the assigned worker is responsible for completing a comprehensive case note for their service user. Accompanying staff members will add their own case note to capture time spent and to include any additional information, such as their own observations.

Case notes are entered into SRS using the below functions:

'Date'
Ensure that the time for the case note reflects when the work was undertaken. The date will automatically default to today's date, whereas the case note may relate to activities from the previous day.

'Service type'
When selecting service type, select the following option which best describes the work:
- Needs assessment and case planning: includes case work activities such as reviewing referral and file material, initial case consult with the Department, strengths and needs assessment work, initial/subsequent Family Action Plans and their reviews, referrals and engagement with stakeholders and emails.
- Intensive family support: such as home visits (including Meet and Greet), family time coaching, psychoeducation, support accessing services.
- Progress report: relating to monthly progress reports. Work undertaken on Exit reports should also be identified under this field.

'Contact type'
When selecting service type, select the following:

- In-person: face-to-face contact
- Phone: phone calls with both clients and stakeholders
- Correspondence: any written work.

General Guidance for recording contact:

Emails
Ensure that the email trail is recorded in one case note, reading in chronological order (original email first, ending with most recent email) so that it is clear for others to read and understand. Emails must include the details of the sender, time and subject for each email, so that all relevant information is documented. Remove unnecessary information at the end of emails such as the disclaimer and acknowledgements so that case notes can be more clearly read.

e.g.
From: Natalie Downes <Natalie.Downes@ich.org.au>
Sent: Wednesday, 30 June 2021 4:40PM
To: Rebecca Muldoon <Rebecca.Muldoon@ich.org.au>
Subject: Update on client

Text messages
Record the time the message was sent and the specific message sent:
e.g. CW sent Sarah Smith a text message at 12:55: Hi Sarah, just a reminder that our home visit is scheduled for 3pm today.

Record subsequent text communications on that day in the same case note.

Home visits
Critical information should be captured such as the time the visit started and ended, persons present, observations of each child and the adults in the home and observations of the home environment. The following template should be followed:

HOME VISIT

Time: 10:10 – 11:45

Location: 38 Sittella St, Inala

Present: Worker, Sarah Smith, Jack Smith, John Smith and Kate Smith

Purpose: Weekly home visit with a focus on developing rewards charts for the children

Home observation: The home was observed to be untidy but otherwise clean and free of hazards.

Child/ren observations: John appeared healthy, he was dressed in clean winter clothing (hoodie, jeans and socks) and there were no notable concerns for his presentation. He enjoyed talking with CW about his toys. Kate appeared healthy but had a bruise on her forehead, which Sarah stated was from a recent fall when Kate hit her head on the tv cabinet, she was also dressed appropriately in a warm bodysuit and appeared settled and comfortable at home (babbling and playing with her toys).

Details of visit:

Next steps:

Note that the use of "-" in between paragraphs will put a space in between the paragraphs. The use of capital letters for headings is helpful as this makes them stand out.

<u>'Services provided'</u>
When completing a case note, review the options provided and select the check box applicable to the support provided that day.
e.g., for transporting and accompanying a client to a meeting with a community housing provider, select 'housing support' and 'client transport'.

<u>'Other Support Services Involved'</u>
Only select the support services involved if their involvement is relevant to the case note.
e.g., if you attend a stakeholder meeting and the psychologist who is supporting your client is present, you would select 'mental health'.

4.3   Recording time

Time is to be captured in 15-minute intervals, rounding up/down as necessary. Hours must be recorded accurately and reflect the work completed with/on behalf of service users. When recording time, ensure:
- Contact is explicitly contact with the client, which can be via phone call, text message, face-to-face or email.
- Case work involves any contact with Child Safety/stakeholders, writing case notes/family action plans/reports/referrals, undertaking research, participating in case discussions etc.
- Travel involves travel a worker does on their own going places (e.g. to and from a home visit). Time spent transporting a client is recorded as contact.

Case notes for case work activities should include:

- Reviewing file material (ego case plans, assessments, CAPs etc.)
- Uploading SRS profile
- Initial case consult
- Inputting self-assessment data
- Review and analysis of assessment data
- Writing and reviewing Family Action Plans
- Writing Progress Reports and progress emails
- Research tasks
- Referrals
- Communications with stakeholders via any means
- Formal case consults (e.g. Prac Panels, Case Review, Family Group meetings)
- Time spent reviewing material in preparation for formal case consults
- Informal case consults (e.g. discussing with Parent Coach about the family, debriefs with Manager or colleague which leads to new insights about how to provide support to the family)
- Training (as per below guidelines)
- Time to record case notes
- Time spent supervision, case reviews or discussing case with coworkers for information/advice.

<u>Recording hours for attendance at training course</u>

Workers can assign 50% of their time spent at training to a service user who will benefit from the learnings.

e.g. if attending a 4-hour course relating to supporting clients with their drug and alcohol use, you can assign 120 minutes to a client you are working with, whereby D&A use is a current concern.

Recording hours for group work

ICH FIS will typically have two facilitators (or sometimes more depending on group size) for our parenting and support groups. The lead facilitator will make a detailed case note for each service provider who participated about the service user's participation in the group and record their hours. The second facilitation will also make a case note for each service user who participated, providing any specific observations or conversations with the service user and record their time associated with the group work activity.

Recording hours for FIS Holiday Family Time Events

ICH FIS periodically hosts family time events which are open to the families ICH FIS is currently supporting. Generally this involves a large number of families and all available FIS team members play a role in providing transport, support and supervision for families at the event.

ICH FIS workers with case management responsibility will case note against their allocated family and record their time. Other ICH FIS workers who play a role with a family will also make a case note of their observations together with their time.

Recording time when working with multiple service users in the family

SRS is set up to capture the time linked with case notes for the primary user on the profile. While FIS does work with couples, both together and individually, the SRS system is set up to only recognise the first person listed on the profile for the purposes of time capture.

This means that when working with the partner of the primary service user as listed on SRS, a note is needed on the primary client's file recording the worker's time and referencing that more information can be found on the individual's file. For example, if Mr Jones is the primary client and work is done with Ms Jones, a case note will be needed on Mr Jones's file noting work has been done with Ms Jones with the time, and referencing a case note on Ms Jones file. If work is being done with both service users at the same time, the case note should be made on the primary client on SRS and the secondary client's name should be ticked so the case note will also be associated with their file. However a second note will be needed on the primary clients file with the time spent with the secondary client. If this is not done, time for only the first service user will be captured in reporting.

Care must be taken to not tick service users which are not related to the details of the case note. This is particularly important if the ICH FIS worker is supporting both parents and one parent is sharing information that should not be accessible to the other parent. For example, in situations of past or current domestic and family violence, information shared by a woman in confidence with the worker must not appear as a case note on the man's profile.

Locked case notes

After two weeks of inactivity case notes are automatically locked, which prevents any editing. Workers can also select 'last update' which locks the case note. Should workers need to access a locked case note, requests must be directed to ICH FIS Manager.

4.4   File naming conventions

Please follow the below guide when saving and uploading documents to SRS:

DOCUMENT	HOW/WHERE TO RECORD	EXAMPLE	PARENT SRS PROFILE	CHILD SRS PROFILE
Emails	Cut and paste to notes including signature. Record as correspondence	N/A	Yes	Tick "Associate Record with"
Referrals	Referral_ DDMMYYYY	Referral_01012021	Yes	No
Case plans	CasePlan_Childname_RD_DDMMYYYY	CasePlan_James_01012021	Yes	Yes
Progress Reports	ProgressReport_Surname_MonthYYYY	ProgressReport_Jones_January2021	Yes	No
Exit Reports	ExitReport_Surname_DDMMYYYY	ExitReport_Jones_01012021	Yes	No
Risk Management Plan	RiskManagementPlan_Surname_DDMMYYY	RiskManagementPlan _Jones_01012021	Yes	Yes if relevant to child
Family Action Plan	FamilyActionPlan_Surname_DDMMYYYY	FamilyActionPlan _Jones_01012021	Yes	No
Family Action Plan Review	FamilyActionPlan Review_Surname_DDMMYYYY	FamilyActionPlanReview_Jones_01012021	No	No
Incident Reports	IncidentReport_Clientsname_DDMMYYYY	IncidentReport_JamesJones_01012021	Yes	Yes
Outside reports eg. Mental Health Assessment	TypeofReport_ DDMMYYYY	Parentalcapacityreport_FionaJones_01012021	Yes	Yes if relevant to child

5. Review

This guideline shall be reviewed in conjunction with the ICH FIS Case Management Policy.

6. Related Documents

Policies and Procedures

ICH FIS Case Management Policy
ICH FIS Assessment Procedure
ICH FIS Intervention and Monitoring Procedure

References
PuP Program Framework
Child Protection Act 1999 (Qld)
Qld Human Services Quality Framework
Investment Specifications
Department's guide to the Safe and Together model

Other
SRS