

Case Closure Procedure

1. Purpose

This procedure provides detailed guidance about the case closure process for the Inala Community House (ICH) Family Intervention Services (FIS).

2. Scope

This procedure applies to all Board members and the CEO.

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.

Family Action Plan (FAP): is a six-month plan (using 6 Month FAP Template) which is developed collaboratively with service users. It details the family's strengths and needs, the service user's goals, the agreed actions to assist families when addressing the child protection worries. A FAP is signed off by all parties to the plan, including service user, ICH FIS Worker and ICH FIS Manager and is reviewed at three-month intervals.

Progress Report: details the work families have been undertaking in order to meet their case plan goals (as identified in the FAP). These reports identify the work being undertaken, other services involved, an assessment of the family using the safety and wellbeing scale, and comments and recommendations for further interventions required.

Parents Under Pressure (PuP): is an integrated theoretical practice framework that guides how practitioners/caseworkers work with families. It is a case management program designed for families where there are multiple issues that impact on family functioning. It is individualised to suit the needs of each family with supporting materials to help put PuP into practice.

Exit Report: is completed at case closure and details the progress the family has made in achieving goals and addressing child protection concerns identified in the FAP. The Exit Report also details goals not yet achieved and any ongoing recommendations for the service user.

4. Procedure

4.1 Case Closure Pathways

4.1.1 *Achievement of service user goals and Family Action Plan (FAP) reviews*

A case may be closed if a service user has achieved the goals identified in their FAP. ICH FIS workers lead FAP reviews in collaboration with the service user at three and six-month intervals. The reviews follow a structured process and must be approved by the ICH FIS Manager prior to submission to the Department (refer to the ICH FIS Case Planning Procedure).

Following the completion of a six-month review, it could be recommended that the service user exits the service if their goals have been met.

4.1.2 *Disengaged service users*

ICH FIS workers play a critical role in developing rapport with service users and encouraging their engagement with the service. Meaningful engagement refers to service users demonstrating their motivation to achieve positive change and working collaboratively with their ICH FIS worker. Examples include service users:

- Prioritising home visits and meetings with their ICH FIS worker
- Prioritising appointments related to their own or their children's health and wellbeing
- Communicating their availability with the ICH FIS worker
- Leading and contributing to outcomes and solutions
- Using time with their ICH FIS worker to be goal oriented and task focused.

It is important for workers to understand the principles underpinning meaningful engagement as well as practical strategies to guide their work with service users. Refer to the ICH FIS Philosophy Statement for further guidance.

At times, service users may have minimal or tokenistic engagement. For example, service users agree to activities but take minimal or no action, they only contact an ICH FIS worker when they have an immediate practical need (e.g., transport, food hamper, data top up etc.) but do not make themselves available for home visits or engage in meaningful discussions and actions that contribute towards achieving their goals.

Examples that the service user may also be disengaged with the service include:

- The family is not at home at the agreed scheduled home visits
- Service users do not respond to phone calls, text messages or emails
- Parents consistently cancel agreed home visits
- Parents do not follow through on agreed activities.

The ICH FIS worker must actively seek to engage with the service user through multiple communication channels such as text messaging, phone calls and emails and document in case notes all attempts. All communication attempts must be documented in the service user's case notes.

If over a two-week period, the service user demonstrates tokenistic engagement or no engagement, the ICH FIS worker shall inform the ICH FIS Manager and inform the service user's Child Safety Officer (CSO) and seek their help in communicating with the service user. The CSO may be aware of circumstances contributing to the service user's lack of engagement, particularly if the service user has previously engaged well the service. A plan may be made to help make contact with the service user and foster their engagement. This may involve the ICH FIS Worker and CSO doing a joint visit to the service user and in rare circumstances, the ICH FIS Worker and ICH FIS Manager may do a welfare check to the home.

If the service user is not engaging or engaging in a tokenistic way for a further two consecutive weeks (ie making it four weeks in total), the ICH FIS worker shall again consult with the ICH FIS Manager and inform the CSO. The ICH FIS Manager and ICH FIS worker will discuss if any other options are available or if a FIS Warning Closure Letter will be issued. This discussion and outcome must be case noted.

The FIS Warning Closure Letter must be communicated in the means most likely to reach the service user and ideally include both electronic and hard copy. The ICH FIS worker should also advise the service user through text, phone call or voice message that this letter has been issued, and that the service user must respond as outlined in the letter if they wish to continue to work with the service. The hope is that a formal letter of warning will prompt the service user to engage, however, if the service user fails to respond within the timeframe specified in the letter (ie typically 7 days) and no other information has come to light to explain the service user's lack of engagement, the ICH FIS worker shall close the case. See Section 4.3 Case Closure Letter for details.

4.1.3 Closed for other reasons

A case may be closed where it has been assessed that further progress on goal achievement is highly unlikely within a reasonable timeframe. Some examples of this include:

- A service user who has been engaged with the service for an extended period and is showing little to no progress on achieving their goals.
- A service user has been incarcerated for an extended period.

A case may also be closed where a service user relocates to a location outside of ICH FIS service delivery geographical area as outlined in the ICH FIS Referrals Acceptance Procedure, or case work/case management is transferred away from the Child Safety Service Centres which we are funded/approved to work with..

4.2 Case closure consultation with the Department

ICH FIS will always seek to keep the Department informed with respect to a service users' engagement with FIS and consult with the Department prior to progressing with a case closure. The ICH FIS worker is in regular communication with the CSO about progress and worries and provides a monthly progress report. The ICH FIS Manager meets on a scheduled regular basis with the Department and uses this forum to raise any concerns or discuss the progress of specific cases that could lead to case closures. Additionally, the ICH FIS Manager may call separate case closure meetings with the Department if required.

At times, ICH FIS may recommend closing a case, however the Department may request the service to continue working with the service user for a particular period of time. This is considered on a case-by-case basis by the ICH FIS Manager.

If a case closes due to service user disengagement, the Department has the option of re-referring the service user to ICH FIS at a later date.

4.3 Service user case closure meetings and feedback opportunities

The ICH FIS worker shall coordinate a case closure meeting with the service user following to a planned closure (unless closure if occurring due to the service user being disengaged). The purpose of this meeting is to review their progress with the service and provide a recap on the service user's achievements, discuss any outstanding activities or items to be considered, and provide resources based on the needs of the service user.

At this meeting, the service user must be offered the opportunity to provide feedback about the service. The ICH FIS worker shall provide the service user with a hard copy feedback form (stored in a blank envelope), which they can complete at the meeting or at a later date. The ICH FIS worker can also email the feedback form (using Survey Monkey) if this is the service user's preference.

The completed form is to be saved on SRS by the ICH FIS worker and a copy is to be email to the ICH FIS Manager for review. The ICH FIS Manager will review the feedback and follow up with the service user to discuss concerns where appropriate and consider any opportunities for improvement. The ICH FIS Manager will record the feedback in the Exit Tracker and the Feedback Register and provide a copy of the feedback to the CEO (with a CC to the ICH FIS worker) noting the feedback and any following actions.

Service user's feedback is also reported monthly to the ICH Board and any actions are documented in the ICH FIS continuous improvement plan.

The ICH FIS Manager also documents any feedback provided by the service user's CSO or other service providers on SRS, which may also inform continuous improvement.

4.4 Closure Letter

Following the decision to close a case, the ICH-FIS Case Worker will write a formal closure letter using the FIS Closure Letter template. The letter will recap on progress made and identify options for the service user to access other relevant services and if appropriate, note that the service user may seek to be re-referred to FIS at another time in the future. The Closure Letter must be communicated in the means most likely to reach the service user and ideally include both electronic and hard copy. A copy of the Closure Letter is to be sent to the CSO, with a copy to the ICH FIS Manager and placed on the service user's file.

4.5 Exit Reports

Exit Reports are provided to the Department no later than 15 business days following the decision to close a service user's case and exit them from ICH FIS program.

Exit Reports are critical in demonstrating a family's progress towards addressing child protection concerns, as detailed in the Family Action Plan (FAP) and case goals during the time of their engagement with ICH FIS.

In instances where a FAP was yet to be developed at the time of case closure, an email outlining any progress, attempts to engage with the family and ongoing worries will be provided in lieu of a formal Exit Report.

4.5.1 Drafting Exit Reports

The ICH FIS worker is responsible for drafting the Exit Report as per the below process:

1. Complete the initial section of the Exit Report, including:
 - Service User Full Name
 - Child Safety details, when the intervention commenced and date of exit and date of most recent FAP. Dates to be recorded in Day/Month/Year format
2. Indicate the reason for FIS closure - whether it signifies goals have been met, or if there is lack of engagement or another reason (e.g. such as service user moving to a new location or there has been a change in case direction).
3. Outline the dates of previous progress reports provided to Child Safety – this should be each month since the first FAP was developed.
4. Complete the Overall assessment of whether goals have been Met section by taking the goal statement directly from the FAPs (that link to the PUP). It is important to ensure that goals which have been achieved from earlier FAPs are reported on in the Exit Report, and not just the goals from the most recent FAP.

For each goal, indicate whether the goal/s have been met, approaching being met, or not met. This assessment must be supported by a comprehensive summary of the interventions, the family's progress, and remaining worries using broad date ranges. Only use specific dates to identify significant incidents or evidence.

5. Complete the Engagement with Family section by outlining engagement with the family. This section is crucial if the case is being closed due to lack of engagement by the service user. Document where contact has been attempted and not reciprocated by the service user, including dates. Ideally include the dates and activities for all engagements with the family, which can be derived from previous Progress Reports. However where the intervention has taken place over a long period (e.g. over 12 months), it is sufficient to provide a general comment about the service users engagement throughout the intervention and make reference back to the progress reports for specific dates.
6. Complete the Other Services Involved section by outlining the details of other services working with the family during the intervention period. Reference the service name, contact person and contact details.
7. Complete the Safety and Wellbeing Scale. Record the rating from the initial Safety and Wellbeing Scale and the current rating. This scale requires the ICH FIS Worker to indicate a score from 1 to 10, rating the level of safety within the home with 10 indicating no further involvement by Child Safety is needed and 1 indicating that children cannot reside safely in the home.

Note: This scale is subjective. The scale serves as a tool to identify and observe change (positive or unfavourable) and it is important that the ICH FIS worker demonstrates their rationale.

Rationale – The rationale aids the reader to understand the rating and provide a brief explanation as to why the scale has changed or remained the same from the beginning of the intervention.

8. The Overall Comments and Recommendations section is also required to be completed. The information included in this section does not need to be exhaustive, particularly if the previous sections of the report have been completed comprehensively.

In this section ICH FIS Workers:

- Provide their assessment of the current situation for the family, referencing protective factors, strengths as well as worries, referencing evidence from elsewhere in the report.
- Recommend future work to be completed with the family (if required).
- Recommend referrals to other services (if required).

Whatever is written in this section should have a clear connection to what has been referenced previously in the exit report and should align and flow on from that information.

4.5.2 *Submitting the Exit Report*

ICH FIS workers are to send the draft report to the ICH FIS Manager to review. It is important that ICH FIS workers review their work to ensure all information is included, and that the report is accurate and respectful of the service user.

The ICH FIS Manager provides feedback about the report if relevant, which the ICH FIS worker will need to address before finalising the report. Once approved, the ICH FIS worker will convert the Exit Report to PDF format and email it to the CSO, copying the Senior Team Leader and ICH FIS Manager. The report should be submitted to the Department within 15 business day of the decision to close the service users' case and exit them from the ICH FIS program.

The Exit report must be saved on SRS, together with a copy of the email recording to whom and when it was sent.

4.6 File Closure

The ICH FIS Manager will close off the service users' profile in SRS and complete the necessary fields under the Closure tab. Receipt of the Closure Letter via email provides the trigger for the ICH FIS Manager to close the SRS file which includes identifying the reason for closure, the extent to which case plan goals were met, completing the closure checklist and service end date and ending the key worker.

The FIS Manager will record in the Exit Tracker details about the closure and feedback obtained.

4.7 Document Compliance

ICH FIS use the Master Case Management Spreadsheet and SRS, and all case closure information is recorded within these two systems.

5. Review

This procedure shall be reviewed in accordance with the ICH FIS Case Management Policy.

6. Related Documents

Policies

ICH Human Rights Policy

ICH Quality and Compliance Policy

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Page 7 of 8
Uncontrolled when Printed

ICH FIS Case Management Policy
ICH FIS Philosophy Statement

Procedures

ICH FIS Assessment Procedure
ICH FIS Case Planning Procedure
ICH FIS Intervention and Monitoring Procedure

Other Documents

SRS Checklist
Master Record Spreadsheet
Service User Engagement Guidelines
ICH FIS Warning Closure Letter Template
ICH FIS Closure Letter Template
ICH FIS Feedback Register
ICH FIS Continuous Improvement Register

Forms

Exit Report Template
Progress Report Template
ICH FIS Family Action Plan Template
ICH FIS Strengths and Needs Assessment
FIS Feedback Form

References

Child Protection Act 1999 (Qld)
Qld Human Services Quality Framework
Investment Specifications