

Strength-based, Solution-focused Supervisor/Worker Conference

PRELIMINARY/PREPARATION PHASE:

The supervisor has reviewed the documentation statistics of the five workers in the unit and has determined that caseworker Brian Smith is behind in meeting the documentation time requirements on one-third of his caseload. Review of documentation statistics on the four other caseworkers in the unit indicates that Brian is the only worker that is presently failing to meet the standard. However, in the past, there have been periods of time in which Brian has managed to keep current in his case documentation. Case assignments have been slightly higher over the past five months. The supervisor has alerted Brian that the documentation issue will be addressed in their weekly conference.

In preparation for the conference, the supervisor considers the three requirements of a professional interview – giving/getting information; initiating/maintaining engagement; and initiating/maintaining movement toward solutions. The supervisor also considers the importance of using the Interactional Helping Model skills of tuning-in to self and others, communicating understanding of the worker's ideas and feelings, and giving and receiving feedback.

BEGINNING/ENGAGEMENT PHASE

1. **Supervisor:** Good morning Brian. How are you today? _____

Caseworker: Not bad. Traffic was pretty heavy this morning, but I got here on time.

2. **Supervisor:** Is there anything that you wanted to add to our conference agenda? _____

Caseworker: Yes. I wanted to get clarification on the referral process to the new drug and alcohol treatment program that the county is using now.

3. **Supervisor:** I'll make sure we save some time at the end of our conference to go over the referral process. Is there anything else? _____

Caseworker: No, I think that's it.

4. **Supervisor:** OK. As I noted on the conference agenda I gave to you earlier, I wanted to go over with you the issue of keeping up to date on case documentation. At present, you are behind on about a third of your cases. What are your thoughts about the issue? _____

Caseworker: It's hard to keep up when I keep getting more cases. The families I'm working with have a lot of problems. I think everyone would agree that the workload around here is way too heavy. .

5. **Supervisor:** So you think that the workload is keeping you from being able to do the required documentation. _____

Caseworker: Right. Does the county want me to do quality work with families or spend all my time with paperwork? No one seems to care about quality, just quantity of paperwork.

6. **Supervisor:** You feel frustrated and angry that you have to choose between serving the needs of your client families and meeting documentation compliance requirements. _____

Caseworker: Exactly.

7. **Supervisor:** Despite that challenge, somehow you have managed to keep up to date on the documentation requirements on two-thirds of your cases. How have you managed to do that? _____

Caseworker: Well I...ah...let me think about that. I guess those cases seem to be more clear to me. I mean, the problems are pretty straight forward and I have been able to find resources that seem to be working well for those families. It's easier to follow and document the progress. On some of those other cases, especially the ones where there has been alleged sexual abuse and the families are resistant, I'm not always sure about what to do. I don't know what to say when it comes to documenting my meetings with the family.

8. **Supervisor:** So, if you had a better idea of how to deal with certain sexual abuse cases, especially involving resistant clients, you might be clearer about what to put in your case notes and more likely to keep up to date. _____

Caseworker: Yes, I think so.

MIDDLE/WORK PHASE

9. **Supervisor:** In going over the documentation statistics for the past twelve months, I noticed that you had a three month period when you were completely up to date on all your case documentation. I think you were carrying about the same number of cases then as you are carrying now. What were you doing then that helped you to keep up with your recording? _____

Caseworker: Hmm...ah...I think that was after I talked to Gretchen about how she manages to stay current with her documentation. She said that when she comes to the office after visits she goes right to her cube and does the case notes from her recent visits. She doesn't go to her mailbox or make or take phone calls until she has finished her notes.

I tried that and it worked for awhile. I guess I got a little lax. Sometimes it's easier to check mail or make a phone call than to think about a visit and figure out what to write.

10. **Supervisor:** Let me ask you something. I want you to imagine a time in the future when this documentation problem is completely resolved. What will be different then about how you will be feeling and what you will be doing? _____

Caseworker: Wow! I guess...ah...I wouldn't be feeling anxious and worried about being behind and getting called in about the problem.

11. **Supervisor:** What else? _____

Caseworker: I think I would feel more confident and maybe a little bit more professional.

12. **Supervisor:** What would other people notice about you that would indicate that something different has happened? _____

Caseworker: Maybe I would be more upbeat and not so cynical at times.

13. **Supervisor:** What would you be doing different in this future time? _____

Caseworker: I would probably be following Gretchen's strategies for keeping up to date on my documentation.

14. **Supervisor:** On a scale of 0 to 10 with 0 being no confidence and 10 being every confidence, how confident are you that you can achieve this kind of miracle where the documentation problem is solved? _____

Caseworker: Let's see. I would say about a six.

15. **Supervisor:** How did you decide on that number? _____

Caseworker: I have had some success with documentation at different times so I know that the miracle isn't impossible. However, I know we are having this conversation today because I haven't been consistent.

16. **Supervisor:** What would help you to boost that confidence number by one point, or maybe two points? _____

Caseworker: The sexual abuse dynamics I mentioned earlier. If I understood how to assess and manage some of those sexual abuse cases I think I would be more confident.

17. **Supervisor:** Anything else? _____

Caseworker: I hate to say this, but maybe reviewing progress on my documentation efforts during supervisory conferences might help me to stay focused.

ENDING/TRANSITION PHASE

18. **Supervisor:** Those are excellent ideas. I'm impressed that you really seem to be taking ownership for working on a solution to the documentation issue. What I

would like you to do before our next conference is to review the selection of sexual abuse trainings in the Child Welfare Training Program calendar and to identify one or two that you think might be useful in helping you to have a better understanding of sexual abuse. You might want to check with your colleagues to see if any of them have taken courses that they found useful. We can review your findings at our next conference and decide on a specific training. Does that work for you? _____

Caseworker: Yes, sure.

19. **Supervisor:** One other thing, I noticed in reviewing some of your records that you are very thorough in recording all the details of your contacts with clients. I'm wondering if you included only that information that related to safety, risk, indicators of progress or lack of progress in pursuing service plan goals, and your actions if you might save time and make your documentation more efficient.

I have an example of one of your records. I have highlighted those parts that address the information areas that I think are most critical. The areas not highlighted are incidental details that you may want to consider omitting in future documentation. I'd like you to review this example and tell me at our next conference if sharpening the focus of your documentation might be helpful.

Will you do this?

Caseworker: Sure.

20. **Supervisor:** Thank you Brian. Now let's take a look at the referral process for the new drug and alcohol program. _____