

# AAA Client-Centered Case Management Standards

Approved by AAA Board: 7/6/05

Revised and approved by AAA Board: 11/12/13, 8/5/19, and ???

In working with clients and their families, Senior Focal Point case managers seek to follow the guidance provided in the following documents:

- [National Association of Social Workers \(NASW\) Code of Ethics, revised 8/4/17](#)
- [National Association of Social Workers \(NASW\) Standards and Indicators for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice, 2015](#)
- [National Association of Social Workers \(NASW\) Standards for Social Work Case Management, 2013](#)
- [National Association of Social Workers \(NASW\), Association of Social Work Boards \(ASWB\), Council on Social Work Education \(CSWE\), and Clinical Social Work Association \(CSWA\) Standards for Technology in Social Work Practice, 2017](#)
- [Commission for Case Manager Certification \(CCMC\) Code of Professional Conduct, revised 2014 & 2015](#)
- [National CLAS Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services in Health and Health Care](#)

## Definition of Client-Centered and Client/Family-Centered Case Management

Client-centered and client/family-centered case management acknowledges the importance of respecting each client's values and beliefs, and their right to confidentiality, and self-determination and/or familial determination. In doing so, case managers are charged with building a trusting relationship with their client and/or client and family and one that seeks to empower such that clients and/or families will feel safe in discussing what they need in order to restore or maintain interdependent and/or independent functioning to the fullest extent possible. Building this relationship is a necessary foundation for linking the client and/or family with systems that include advocacy, services, resources, and opportunities. In cases where clients have immigrated to the U.S. and may lack knowledge of the health and social welfare systems, case managers will serve as educators to these clients such that they understand the systems and available benefits regardless of immigration status. For clients seeking legal status, coordinating immigration services and support, including linking to resources and assisting older adults with visa, residency, and citizenship processes. Using a collaborative client-centered and/or client/family centered approach, a case manager assesses the needs of the client and, when appropriate, the client's family, and then plans, implements, coordinates, monitors, evaluates, and advocates for options and services required to meet their needs and preferences.

## Underlying Case Management Values

The values that underlie a client-centered and client/family-centered case management process are key to ensuring that needs are assessed and services provided. These values include:

- Belief in the dignity, worth, and rights of all peoples;
- Cultural recognition and understanding of the client's and/or family's values and beliefs, and the key role they play in conducting an assessment and referrals that result in the receipt of quality care;



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- Acknowledgement of and support for a client's cultural preference for either independence or interdependence;
- Commitment to ensuring quality outcomes for clients;
- Recognition that empowerment of clients is essential to their long-term health care success;
- Embracing the premise that when clients and their families reach the optimum level of wellness and functional capability, everyone benefits: clients, families and other support systems, and the health care delivery system;
- Developing an awareness of and knowledge about service gaps affecting specific communities, and advocating for the gaps to be addressed;
- Honoring the ethical principles of autonomy, beneficence, nonmaleficence, justice, and fidelity.

## Case Management Goals

The primary goal of client-centered and client/family-centered case management is to optimize client functioning by conducting a thorough and culturally responsive assessment of needs. Using this assessment, the case manager and the client and/or their family can work together to develop a plan to provide services in the most culturally responsive, efficient, and effective manner. Client-centered and client/family-centered case management rests on a foundation of professional training, values, knowledge, theory, experience, and skills used in the service of attaining goals established in conjunction with the client and the client's family and/or significant individuals, when appropriate. Client-centered and client/family-centered case management is ongoing and includes the following specific goals:

- Promote and enhance, when possible, the skills of the client and/or their family in accessing and utilizing supports and services;
- Educate clients who have immigrated to the U.S. and their families about how the service system works and how to access and use it;
- Use the capacities of social networks and relevant human services providers to promote the functioning and well-being of the client to enable independent or interdependent functioning;
- Provide supportive services for clients seeking legal status, which can include providing services for their passing the citizenship test;
- Monitor and evaluate service effectiveness while providing services and supports that align with the client and their family's culture;
- Create and/or promote formal and informal systems to provide the client and/or family with resources, services, and opportunities.

NOTE: Time spent transporting clients to activities, programs, etc. must include discussions addressing client service goals.

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## Case Management Standards

### Standard 1

The case manager should:

- Possess the knowledge, skills, and experience necessary to competently perform client-centered and client/family-centered case management duties, which include knowledge regarding the scope of services for older adults and their needs;
- Provide bilingual/bicultural case management services when needed or if unable to do so, arrange for these services to be provided;
- Participate in ongoing, formal evaluation of their practice to advance client well-being, assess the culturally responsive, appropriateness, and effectiveness of services and supports, and improve practice;
- Have an associate, bachelor, or master degree in a human services-related field from any country or possess equivalent experience

Interpretation: The practice of client-centered and client/family-centered case management is multifaceted and requires the case manager to be an advocate, consultant, evaluator, planner, and a resource source. The case manager has the knowledge and skills needed to perform case management duties.

The case manager strives to become and remain proficient in professional case management practice and performance by keeping current with emerging related knowledge and [culturally and linguistically appropriate skills](#). The employing organization should provide training opportunities to enhance the case management staff's skills to include cultural responsiveness. Case managers maintain their competency at a level that ensures their clients will receive services that are culturally responsive and of the highest quality.

### Standard 2

The case manager shall use professional knowledge, skills, and competence in serving the client, whose interests are paramount, and/or their family. Services provided by case managers shall be confidential, objective, and [culturally and linguistically appropriate](#).

Interpretation: The case manager's primary responsibility is to the client. Adherence to putting the client's best interests first may be difficult, particularly in a climate of scarce resources. Cost containment goals may conflict with provision of services that are in the client's best interest. While working within the context of the agency's goals and resources, the case manager ensures that each client receives appropriate assistance by providing accurate and complete information about the extent and nature of available services and by assisting the client and/or their family with deciding which services will best meet their needs. For clients who have immigrated to the U.S. and may lack knowledge of the health and social welfare systems, case managers will serve as educators to these clients, regardless of immigration status.

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For clients seeking legal status, coordinating immigration services and support, including linking to resources and assisting older adults with visa, residency, and citizenship processes. Personal or professional gain is never placed before the client's best interest.

In order to adhere to this standard, the case manager:

- Seeks the advice of colleagues and supervisors whenever such consultation is in the client's best interest;
- Adheres to, maintains, and promotes professional ethics and boundaries;
- Exercises professional judgment and prudence in selecting and recommending services;
- Ends client services when no longer needed by or helpful to the client;
- Notifies the client and/or their family promptly when services are anticipated to be interrupted or ended;
- Makes necessary and client and/or family authorized transfer or referral if the client still needs such service to ensure continuity of care;
- Has an understanding of clients' potential communication challenges when using technology and possesses the ability to implement strategies to address such challenges;
- Possesses a knowledge base of their clients' cultures and demonstrates competence in the provision of services that are responsive to clients' cultures and to differences among people and cultural groups;
- Communicates with clients in clients' preferred language(s), seeking and using a professional interpreter or translator as needed;
- Is introspective about their own culture, identity, and values in order to practice cultural humility and not impose these on clients;
- Exhibits knowledge about and seeks to understand the nature of social diversity and oppression with respect to race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status, political belief, religion, immigration status, and mental or physical ability;
- Maintains objectivity in their professional relationships, does not impose their values on their clients, and will not enter into a relationship with a client (business, personal, or otherwise) that interferes with that objectivity;
- Respects the rights and inherent dignity of all their clients.

## Standard 3

The case manager shall ensure clients are involved in all phases of client-centered and client/family-centered case management practice to the greatest extent possible.

Interpretation: The case manager and client share responsibility for selected client-centered and client/family-centered case management tasks, thus maximizing client involvement in decision making and problem solving. The case manager's role is to assist the clients with decisions by giving them all known options. During this time, it is important for the case manager to provide support to the client and,

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as appropriate, their family. The case manager always considers the client's best interest regardless of who is legally responsible for the client. The case manager:

- Collaborates with clients—and, when appropriate, family members—in the ongoing goal setting, information-gathering and decision-making process to create and modify individualized services that promote clients' strengths, advance clients' well-being, and help clients achieve their goals. Case management service plans are based on meaningful assessments and have specific, attainable, measurable objectives.
- Respects and promotes either self-determination or familial-determination the dignity of risk for competent clients whenever possible. This involves helping the client to identify those goals that are most important to them in their life and supporting the client to achieve these goals. If, however, the case manager assesses the goals/choices being made by the client may pose imminent risk to themselves or others—and the client may not understand such risks—the case manager may no longer be able to support that client in achieving their identified goals. In such circumstances, the case manager may consider making a referral to the Adult Protective Services (APS) Helpline, law enforcement, and/or Journey Crisis depending on the situation.
- Provides the necessary information to educate and empower clients and/or families to make informed decisions. Case managers provide information to clients and/or families about case management services, including a description of services, benefits, risks, alternatives and the right to refuse services.

## Standard 4

**The case manager shall ensure the client's right to privacy and ensure appropriate confidentiality when information about the client is released to others.**

Interpretation: All information received from a client or about a client must absolutely be kept confidential. A release of information signed by the client or the client's legal guardian enables the case manager to release information to a third party. All this is done with the client's knowledge of what is being released, to whom, and the reason. At that time, the case manager verbally tells the client again about confidentiality. Client files are kept in a secure limited-access area and made available only to those who are authorized access. The case manager interviews clients privately and offers them the opportunity to be interviewed alone at a home visit, in the case manager's private office, or in a mutually agreed upon community/public location as safety dictates. Case managers can also offer the opportunity for the client to have others present and/or make decisions. The case manager:

- Discusses with clients the case manager's agency's policies 1) concerning the use of technology in the provision of professional services, and 2) in the event of a breach of confidential client information.
- Obtains clients' informed consent before making audio or video recordings of them or permitting observation of services to clients by consultants.
- Uses applicable safeguards (such as encryption, firewalls, and passwords) to protect the

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confidentiality of electronic communications such as email, online posts, online chat sessions, mobile communication, and text messages, as well as information provided to clients or third parties.

- Refrains from disclosing identifying information when discussing clients with consultants unless the client has consented to disclosure of confidential information.
- Avoids communicating with clients for personal or non-work-related purposes.
- Possesses knowledge about and acts in accordance with federal, state, and local laws and procedures regarding client consent, confidentiality, and the release of information, as it relates to their scope of practice.
- Documents all case management activities in the appropriate client record in a timely manner—as mandated by the case manager’s agency. Such documentation shall be recorded on paper or electronically and shall be prepared, completed, secured, maintained, and disclosed in accordance with regulatory, legislative, statutory, and organizational requirements.

## Standard 5

**The case manager shall intervene at the client level to provide and/or coordinate delivery of direct services to clients and, as appropriate, their families.**

Interpretation: Client-centered and client/family-centered case management consists of the following components that define service to clients:

- Outreach
- Psychosocial and functional assessment
- Service plan development
- Plan implementation
- Case consultation when appropriate
- Coordination
- Monitoring and recording of services
- Client advocacy for obtaining needed resources
- Reassessment of client status
- Termination when goals are met

Service delivery is guided by obtaining a comprehensive understanding of the goals, unique strengths, challenges, and needs of each client. As appropriate, the case manager consults with pertinent fellow professionals to assist in the provision of medical, psychosocial, and domestic assistance, as well as financial guidance for clients. The client and/or family members and/or significant individuals (e.g., community leaders) are involved to the fullest extent.

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## Standard 6

**The case manager shall improve access to needed services using advocacy skills.**

Interpretation: The case manager identifies community resources appropriate for meeting the client's goals in a culturally responsive manner. The case manager advocates for the rights, decisions, strengths, and needs of clients and shall promote clients' access to culturally appropriate resources, supports, and services.

## Standard 7

**The case manager shall be knowledgeable about resource availability, service costs, and budgetary parameters and be fiscally responsible in carrying out client-centered and client/family-centered case management functions and activities.**

Interpretation: Client-centered and client/family-centered case management practice occurs within parameters imposed by the program and agency. As such, the case manager maintains client focus and simultaneously allocates service resources and monitors program, agency, and delivery system performance. Thus, the case manager is responsible both for delivering appropriate services to the client and for carefully managing the financial resources of the program(s). Case managers fully disclose the following to clients: available and non-available resources; required co-payments and cost sharing; time limits on service provision; timing and frequency of required reassessments; and appropriateness and fiscal effects of treatment choices. Case managers must also be knowledgeable about how service costs and eligibility may differ for clients who are undocumented.

## Standard 8

**The case manager shall participate in evaluative and quality assurance activities designed to monitor appropriateness and effectiveness of both service delivery system and client-centered case management.**

Interpretation: The quality, effectiveness, and appropriateness of client-centered and client/family-centered case management services are regularly reviewed and evaluated, using criteria and standards established by the agency and its funders. Such criteria and standards relate to indicators of need for services and effectiveness of required interventions. Contracted providers are reviewed and evaluated in the same manner. Appropriate client feedback is sought on services they have received, and that feedback is incorporated in this process. The review and evaluation of client-centered case management services are documented and include feedback and implementation of corrective measures, when necessary.

## Standard 9

**The case manager shall carry a reasonable caseload that allows time to effectively plan, provide, and evaluate client-centered and client/family-centered case management tasks related to client and system interventions.**



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Interpretation: The agency establishes policies and develops systems governing reasonable workloads and caseloads for case managers. A number of variables affect caseload size. Caseload standards are based on the scope of professional responsibilities, the volume of clients to be served, the amount of time case managers need to spend with clients, the breadth and complexity of client problems or services, and the length and duration of case mix in determining case manager/client involvement. The number of cases a case manager can realistically handle is affected by the degree to which caseloads consist of acute, high-risk, or multi-need clients.

Caseload size realistically allows for meaningful opportunities for face-to-face client contacts. As caseload size increases, a case manager has decreasing time to perform ongoing client-centered and client/family-centered case management activities such as follow-up, monitoring, and reassessment. The agency and the case manager have a joint responsibility to address and remedy caseload issues and concerns that would negatively impact the case manager's ability to provide high-quality case management services to their clients.

## Standard 10

**The case manager shall treat colleagues with courtesy and strive to enhance inter-professional, intra-professional, and inter-agency cooperation on behalf of the client.**

Interpretation: Client-centered and client/family-centered case management requires well-coordinated, collaborative, and effective interdisciplinary efforts among colleagues and organizations to enhance service delivery and facilitate client goal attainment. Interpersonal relationships are characterized by a spirit of respect and caring that is critical to the success of the professional relationship between the case manager, client, and consultant. Also, respectful treatment of colleagues is a prerequisite for effective communication and cooperation among professionals from different disciplines.

*For additional information and further interpretation, consult the NASW Website at [www.socialworkers.org](http://www.socialworkers.org).*