

# AAA Client-Centered Case Management Standards

Approved by AAA Board: 7/6/05  
Revised and approved by AAA Board: 11/12/13 & ???

## **Definition of Client-Centered Case Management**

Client-centered case management is based on the recognition that a trusting and empowering direct relationship between case manager and client is essential to facilitate a client's use of services along a continuum of care and to restore or maintain independent functioning to the fullest extent possible. It requires the case manager to develop and maintain a professional relationship with the client, which may include linking the client with systems that provide needed advocacy, services, resources, and opportunities.

A case manager assesses the needs of the client and, when appropriate, the client's family and plans, implements, coordinates, monitors, evaluates, and advocates for options and services required to meet an individual's needs and preferences. This is a professional and collaborative process between case manager and the client.

The focus of case management is client centered, recognizing the importance of each client's interests, worth, and right to self-determination and confidentiality. This document adheres to the intent of the following:

- National Association of Social Workers (NASW) *Code of Ethics*, revised 8/4/17
- 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

## **Underlying Values**

Case management is a means for improving client health, wellness, and autonomy through advocacy, communication, education, identification of service resources, and service facilitation and encompasses a number of key values. Case managers:

- Recognize the dignity, worth, and rights of all people.
- Understand and commit to quality outcomes for clients, appropriate use of resources, and the empowerment of clients in a manner that is supportive and objective.
- Embrace the underlying premise that when clients reach the optimum level of wellness and functional capability, everyone benefits: the client, their support systems, and the health care delivery and benefits systems.
- Apply in their work the ethical principles of autonomy, beneficence, nonmaleficence, justice, and fidelity.

## **Goals**

The primary goal of client-centered case management is to optimize client functioning by a thorough assessment of needs. Using this assessment, the case manager and the client work together to develop a plan to provide services in the most culturally appropriate, efficient, and effective manner. Client-centered case management rests on a foundation of professional training, values, knowledge, theory, and skills used in the service of attaining goals established in

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conjunction with the client and the client's family and/or significant individuals, when appropriate. Client-centered case management is ongoing and includes the following specific goals:

- Promote and enhance, when possible, the skills of the client in accessing and utilizing supports and services
- Use the capacities of social networks and relevant human services providers to promote the functioning and well-being of the client to enable independent functioning
- Monitor service effectiveness while providing services and supports in the most efficient manner possible
- Create and/or promote formal and informal systems to provide the client with resources, services, and opportunities

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## **STANDARD 1:** The case manager should–

- Have an associate, bachelor, or master degree in a human services-related field.
- Possess the knowledge, skills, and experience necessary to competently perform client-centered case management duties, which include knowledge regarding the scope of services for older adults and their needs.
- Participate in ongoing, formal evaluation of their practice to advance client well-being, assess the appropriateness and effectiveness of services and supports, and improve practice.

**Interpretation:** The practice of client-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. The employing organization should provide training opportunities to enhance the case management staff's skills. Case managers maintain their competency at a level that ensures their clients will receive the highest quality of service.

In addition to academic credentials and experience, the case manager understands characteristics of the older adult population.

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**STANDARD 2:** The case manager shall use professional knowledge, skills, and competence in serving the client, whose interests are paramount. 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 to decide which services will best meet their needs. 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.
- Promptly notifies the client when services are anticipated to be interrupted or ended.
- Makes necessary and client 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 sensitive to clients' cultures and to differences among people and cultural groups.
- 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.

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**STANDARD 3:** The case manager shall ensure clients are involved in all phases of client-centered case management practice to the greatest extent possible.

**Interpretation:** The case manager and client share responsibility for selected client-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, 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 self-determination and 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 to make informed decisions. Case managers provide information to clients about case management services, including a description of services, benefits, risks, alternatives and the right to refuse services.

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**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 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.

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**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 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, when the client so chooses, family members and/or significant individuals, 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 sensitive 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.

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**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 case management functions and activities.

**Interpretation:** Client-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.

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**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 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.

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**STANDARD 9:** The case manager shall carry a reasonable caseload that allows time to effectively plan, provide, and evaluate client-centered case management tasks related to client and system interventions.

**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 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.

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**STANDARD 10:** The case manager shall treat colleagues with courtesy and strive to enhance inter-professional, intra-professional, and interagency cooperation on behalf of the client.

**Interpretation:** Client-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 ~~relationship~~. 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).*