1.6 Required Documentation

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1.6.1 Who is required to document?

All WorkFirst ~~Program Specialists (WFPS) and WorkFirst Social Service Specialists (WFSSS)~~staff are required to document every interaction with a WorkFirst participant. This chapter explains in detail the importance of documentation for case management duties and the crucial role documentation plays in supporting a participant to engage in WorkFirst activities.

1.6.2 Why documentation matters?

Effective documentation provides a clear and concise description and result of an interaction between ~~the~~ ~~WFPS/WFSSS~~WorkFirst staff and the participant. It helps fellow ~~WFPS/WFSSS~~WorkFirst staff who must rely on documentation to make decisions or obtain information about a participant's experience. Participants are often under stress and telling their story more than once can be traumatic. E~~, and e~~ffective documentation allows the participant to identify their needs without having to repeat themselves. Thorough documentation serves as one of the most crucial functions of case management by:

- Providing enough information to allow for partnership and an opportunity to build an effective case management relationship.~~;~~
- Capturing a timeline of the participant's past, present, and future circumstances.~~;~~

- Providing context, including barriers and needs without having to ask the participant to repeat their story, including painful parts.;
- Allowing the participant to trust and engage in self-directed participation.;
- Creating a clear picture for WorkFirst staff~~other WFPS/WFSSS~~ to review and build from when interacting with the participant.;
- Allowing WorkFirst staff to understand the participant's past, current, and future goals.; ~~and~~
- Identifying strengths; and building on participant's successes.

Note: Documentation should add value to the case, be objective and clear. Documentation should never contain judgement based ~~on~~ statements or opinions.

1.6.3 When and where to document?

Whenever there is an interaction with the participant or on behalf of a participant, ~~the WFPS/WFSSS~~WorkFirst staff must document the issues, needs, and actions taken in a timely manntter. When working with a two-parent household, document participation discussions with both parties as necessary to develop their Individual Responsibility Plans (IRPs). Be descriptive and document interactions with the participant or other parties involved in their WorkFirst participation, deferral, or exemption. Also, document any time action is taken on their case. Some examples include:

- During/after the comprehensive evaluation and assessment
- Case staffings
- Referrals
- Support service requests
- Receipt of email from the participant or a provider
- Interactions with an AREP, caregiver, or Power of Attorney
- Interactions with a provider, contractor, or partner
- Contact with landlords or vendors
- Scheduling or mailing correspondence

The type of interaction with the participant determines where to document, including::

- eJAS Client Notes for most contacts
    - Select the **Case Notes** type that best captures the type of contact
- Pathway Development Tool (PDT)
    - Supports Comprehensive Evaluation (
    - See WFHB 3.2.1 and 3.2.3) for more information and

- o Social Services Assessments (
  - o See WFHB 6.2 and 3.2.3) for more information
- Individual Responsibility Plans (IRPs)
  - o See WFHB 3.3.1 for more informationexpectations in IRP
- Case Staffing/Extension Review
- Sanction Review
- Sanction Re-Engagement Summary Page
- Time Limit Extension Review tool
- Referral
- **Confidential Note Types or "Special Records"**
  - o See WFHB section 1.6.4

Note: Do no harm means ; not putting people's safety in jeopardy and , always use a confidential note type when documenting the following notes; domestic violence, mental health, substance abuse, and protected health information such as HIV..

1.6.4 What does "special records" mean?

A participant's information is confidential under state and federal law. In eJAS, there are certain categories of client information, called "**Special Records**" with increased protection. There These categories contain information about:

- Mental Health
- Family Violence
- Chemical Dependency
- Confidential Payments (documentation for confidential support services)
- HIV/AIDS/STD

    NOTE: WorkFirst staff use the HIV/AIDS/STD note type only when a participant voluntarily provides information about HIV/AIDS/STD issues that could interfere with WorkFirst activities. It can also be documented in the PDT *Medical/Health* topic.

- Confidential Payments (documentation for confidential support services)

Entering information on these topics in "**Special Records**" categories in eJAS Client Notes is crucial to protect the participant's privacy and to adhere to state and federal confidentiality laws for substance abuse, mental health needs and domestic violence. When adding personal/private information into data systems, staff must follow a "do no harm" approach. See WorkFirst

~~Handbook section 3.7.2.4 for instructions on how to have confidential notes/special records removed from a non-protected note type(s).~~

Note: Do no harm means - not putting people's safety in jeopardy and always use a confidential note type when documenting the following notes: domestic violence, mental health, substance abuse, and protected health information such as HIV.

If these topics come up in discussion with a participant, WorkFirst staff should only use the corresponding note type in eJAS Client Notes when documenting the discussion and participant's circumstances relating to the topic.

When WorkFirst staff complete the PDT all confidential information needs to be placed in sections not visible to WorkFirst partners. WorkFirst partners have view only access to non-confidential sections in the PDT in eJAS as follows:

- Some, but not all of, the "Family" section
- Employment & Work Experience
- Education & Training
- Financial Literacy
- Some, but not all of the "Housing" section
- Transportation
- Legal Issues
- Some of the "Navigation" section

These sections cannot have any confidential information included.

NOTE: eJAS Note Redaction and Data Fix Requests

If WorkFirst CSD staff or partners enter confidential information in a non-confidential note type or section of the PDT, that information must be redacted.

- For CSD WorkFirst staff, see the CSD Procedure Manual - eJAS Note Redaction and Data Fix Requests procedure.
- For WorkFirst Partners/Contractors:
    - Some partners have their own process or contact points for redaction:
        - ESD Career Scope Coaches and Life Skills Instructors contact ESD Help Desk 1-877-397-1212
        - Commerce Community Jobs/Community Works Providers contact Technical Assistance System or submit email to comworkfirst@commerce.wa.gov
        - Community College WorkFirst Program staff contact 360-704-1837.

1.6.5 What are the documentation standards?

Every interaction must be documented; however, not all documentation requires the same amount of detail and depth. Documentation needs vary based on the type of interaction you have with a participant and builds on the ongoing story and goals of the participant. Types of interactions that should include documentation are as follows:

- **Comprehensive Evaluation/Assessments:**
  - Household composition
  - Circumstances that led to TANF application
  - Areas of stability and strength for the family
  - Areas of instability or obstacles identified by the family
  - Identified goals for the family

- **Case Staffing:**
  - Who participated and their role with the family
  - Reasons for the staffing (examples: transition from activity to another, good cause determination, celebrate participant's success)
  - Outcome of the staffing and next steps
  - Ongoing plan (IRP, deferral, referrals)

- **IRP Development:**
  - Reflect the participant's understanding off agreement to theira chosen activity and the IRP
  - Activities and hours of participation
  - How transportation and child care are is addressed
  - How the IRP is working towards customer goals
  - For two-parent households,: document under note type **Participation** in both cases (e.g. "Participation was discussed and agreed upon with both parties").

- **Support Service Request(s) -:** See [WFHB Section 2.2:](#)
    - Type of support(s) being requested
    - Discussion about any resources that may currently be available
    - Any lower cost alternatives that might be available
    - How do they plan to take over the ongoing costs in the future
    - Outcome of request:
        - If approved, explanation for the amount provided
        - If denied, explanation for why
- **Other Ongoing Interactions -:** Describe elements of the situation and document the plan by using:
    - **Description:** What's the reason for the contact
        - Who was contacted
        - How did the contact occur (in person, phone call including *contact number*, document in ECR)
        - Why is the contact being made
    - **Intervention:** What was decided during the contact
        - What is the need the participant disclosed
        - Information or suggestions provided
    - **Plan/Outcome:** What are the participant's next steps
        - When is the next step due
        - Any referrals needed or made

1.6.6 How to stay objective?

Think of the four C's:

- **Be CLEAR:**
    - Everyone needs to know what steps have occurred and what may be next on the case for seamless contact if/when the next worker opens the case record.
    - Stay away from abbreviations and acronyms.
- **Be CONCISE:**
    - Personal judgments or opinions don't have a place in documentation.
    - Use non-judgmental observations to support interactions and interventions. T; this includes staying away from "I statements" and other first personfirst-person notes.

- **Be CORRECT:**
  - Stay away from blaming the participant, co-workers, or partners in all notes.
  - State facts and ,do not generalize or stereotype.
  - Notes from Instant Message Platforms(~~Skype~~ such as Teams) conversations and emails with peers and partners generally need to be summarized and paraphrased for clarity and appropriateness. Be very cautious about cutting and pasting conversations into the notes.
  - Use preferred name, gender pronouns in all records and interactions.
- **Be CUSTOMER APPROVED:**
  - Be willing to read or share what was documented with the participant and co-workers.
  - Remember, documentation is written word which reflects everyone is treated with dignity and respect, providing equitable services.

1.6.7 What are the best practices in documentation?

Best Practices include:

- A d~~D~~escription of the current situation, such as, the reason for the interaction, the needs the participant had, and how it was resolved.
- The expectation that~~for~~ someone unfamiliar to the case is ~~to be~~ able to determine the status/issues/next steps for the participant at the next interaction.

Documentation must prove delivery of service with information as follows:

Accurate	Objective
Concise	Specific
Consistent	Substantive
Descriptive	Timely

Accurate and consistent documentation:

- Supports program integrity and equitable service delivery.
- Supports C~~c~~ase M~~m~~anagers in planning, implementing, and delivering services.
- Provides accurate history of all participant requests for support services, ~~to~~ explaining denials and approvals.
- Provides relevant history regarding employment readiness, barriers, mental health concerns, substance abuse issues, learning needs, ~~and~~ physical disabilities, etc.

- Highlights the participant's strengths, supports, and what has worked well for them in overcoming obstacles.

- Provides accountability in serving the participant with each interaction.

Resources

- [Documentation Expectation Desk Aid](#)

Related WorkFirst Handbook Sections

- [3.2.1 Comprehensive Evaluation](#)
- [3.3.1 IRP](#)
- [6.1 Resolving Issues](#)