

Case Management Code of Ethics

Case Management Definition

Case management is a practice in which the service recipient is a partner to the greatest extent possible in accessing needs, obtaining services, treatments and supports, and in preventing and managing crisis. The individual/family and the practitioner plan, coordinate, monitor, adjust, and advocate for services and supports directed toward the achievement of the individualized, personal goals for community living (National Association of Case Management).

Ethical Standards

The following ethical standards are relevant to the professional activities of all case managers. These standards concern (1) case managers' ethical responsibilities to clients, (2) case managers' ethical responsibilities to colleagues, (3) case managers' ethical responsibilities in practice settings, (4) case managers' ethical responsibilities as professionals, (5) case managers' ethical responsibilities to the case management profession, and (6) case managers' ethical responsibilities to the broader society.

(The following ethical standards have been taken from the Code of Ethics of the National Association of Social Workers).

1. Case Managers' Ethical Responsibilities to the Case Work Profession

1.01 Integrity of the Profession

- (a) Case managers should work toward the maintenance and promotion of high standards of practice.
- (b) Case managers should uphold and advance the values, ethics, knowledge, and mission of the profession. Case workers should protect, enhance, and improve the integrity of the profession through appropriate study and research, active discussion, and responsible criticism of the profession.
- (c) Case managers should contribute time and professional expertise to activities that promote respect for the value, integrity, and competence of the casework profession.

2. Case Managers' Ethical Responsibilities to Clients

2.01 Commitment to Clients

Case managers' primary responsibility is to promote the well-being of clients.

2.02 Self-Determination

Case managers respect and promote the right of clients to assist clients in their efforts to identify and clarify their goals. Case managers may limit clients' right to self-determination when, in the case managers' professional judgment, clients' actions or potential actions pose a serious, foreseeable, and imminent risk to themselves or others.

2.03 Informed Consent

- (a) Case managers should provide services to clients only in the context of a professional relationship based, when appropriate, on valid informed consent.

(b) Case managers should take steps to ensure clients' comprehension when clients are not literate or have difficulty understanding the primary language used in the practice setting.

2.04 Competence

Case managers should provide services and represent themselves as competent only within the boundaries of their education, training, license, certification, consultation received, supervised experience, or other relevant experience.

2.05 Cultural Competence and Social Diversity

(a) Case managers should understand culture and its function in human behavior and society, recognizing the strengths that exist in all cultures.

(b) Case managers should have a knowledge base of their clients' cultures and be able to demonstrate competence in the provision of services that are sensitive to clients' cultures and to differences among people and cultural groups.

(c) Case managers should obtain education about and seek to understand the nature of social diversity and oppression with respect to race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, political belief, religion, and mental or physical disability.

2.06 Conflicts of Interest

(a) Case managers should be alert to and avoid conflicts of interest that interfere with the exercise of professional discretion and impartial judgment. Case managers should inform clients when a real or potential conflict of interest arises and take reasonable steps to resolve the issue in a manner that makes the clients' interests primary and protects clients' interests to the greatest extent possible. In some cases, protecting clients' interests may require termination of the professional relationship with proper referral of the client.

(b) Case managers should not take unfair advantage of any professional relationship or exploit others to further their personal, religious, political, or business interests.

(c) Case managers should not engage in dual or multiple relationships with clients or former clients in which there is a risk of exploitation or potential harm to the client. In instances when dual or multiple relationships are unavoidable, case managers should take steps to protect clients and are responsible for setting clear, appropriate, and culturally sensitive boundaries. (Dual or multiple relationships occur when case managers relate to clients in more than one relationship, whether professional, social, or business. Dual or multiple relationships occur simultaneously or consecutively.)

(d) When case managers provide services to two or more people who have a relationship with each other (for example, couples, family members), case managers should clarify with all parties which individuals will be considered clients and the nature of case managers' professional obligations to the various individuals who are receiving services. Case managers who anticipate a conflict of interest among the individuals receiving services or who anticipate having to perform in potentially conflicting roles should clarify their role with the parties involved and take appropriate action to minimize any conflict of interest.

2.07 Privacy and Confidentiality

(a) Case managers should respect clients' right to privacy. Case managers should not solicit private information from clients unless it is essential to providing services or conducting case management evaluation. Once private information is shared, standards of confidentiality apply.

(b) Case managers may disclose confidential information when appropriate with valid consent from a client or person legally authorized to consent on behalf of a client.

(c) Case managers should protect the confidentiality of all information obtained in the course of professional service, except for compelling professional reasons. The general expectation that case managers will keep information confidential does not apply when disclosure is necessary to prevent serious, foreseeable, and imminent harm to a client or other identifiable person. In all instances, case managers should disclose the least amount of confidential information necessary to achieve the desired purpose; only information that is directly relevant to the purpose for which the disclosure is made should be revealed.

(d) Case managers should inform clients, to the extent possible, about the disclosure of confidential information and the potential consequences, when feasible before the disclosure is made. This applies whether case managers disclose confidential information on the basis of a legal requirement or client consent.

(e) Case managers should discuss with clients and other interested parties the nature of confidentiality and limitations of clients' rights to confidentiality. Case managers should review with clients circumstances where confidential information may be requested and where disclosure of confidential information may be legally required. This discussion should occur as soon as possible in the case manager-client relationship and as needed throughout the course of the relationship.

(f) Case managers should not discuss confidential information in any setting unless privacy can be ensured. Case managers should not discuss confidential information in public or semipublic areas such as hallways, waiting rooms, elevators, and restaurants.

(g) Case managers should protect the confidentiality of clients' written and electronic records and other sensitive information. Case managers should take reasonable steps to ensure that clients' records are stored in a secure location and that clients' records are not available to others who are not authorized to have access.

(h) Case managers should take precautions to ensure and maintain the confidentiality of information transmitted to other parties through the use of computers, electronic mail, facsimile machines, telephones and telephone answering machines, and other electronic or computer technology. Disclosure of identifying information should be avoided whenever possible.

(i) Case managers should transfer or dispose of clients' records in a manner that protects clients' confidentiality and is consistent with state statutes governing records.

(j) Case managers and agencies should comply with all HIPAA regulations. (www.hhs.gov/ocr/hipaa)

2.08 Access to Records

(a) Case managers should provide clients with reasonable access to records concerning the clients. Case managers who are concerned that clients' access to records could cause serious misunderstanding or harm to the client should provide assistance in interpreting the records and consultation with the client regarding the records.

(b) When providing clients with access to their records, case managers should take steps to protect the confidentiality of others identified or discussed in such records.

2.09 Sexual Relationships

Case managers should under no circumstances engage in sexual activities or sexual contact with current or former clients or clients' families.

2.10 Physical Contact

Case managers should not engage in physical contact with clients when there is a possibility of psychological harm to the client as a result of the contact (such as cradling or caressing clients). Case managers who engage in appropriate physical contact with the clients are responsible for setting clear, appropriate, and culturally sensitive boundaries that govern such physical contact.

2.11 Sexual Harassment

Case managers should not sexually harass clients. Sexual harassment includes unwelcome and unwarranted sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct.

2.12 Derogatory Language

Case managers should not use derogatory language in their written or verbal communications to or about clients. Case managers should use accurate and respectful language in all communications to and about clients.

2.13 Clients Who Lack Decision-Making Capacity

When case managers act on behalf of clients who lack the capacity to make informed decisions, case managers should take reasonable steps to safeguard the interests and rights of those clients.

2.14 Interruption of Services

Case managers should make reasonable efforts to ensure continuity of services in the event that services are interrupted by factors such as unavailability, relocations, illness, disability, or death.

2.15 Termination of Services

(a) Case managers should terminate services to clients and professional relationships with them when such services and relationships are no longer required or no longer serve the clients' needs or interests.

(b) Case managers should take reasonable steps to avoid abandoning clients who are still in need of services. Case managers should withdraw services precipitously only under unusual circumstances, giving careful consideration to all factors in the situation and take care to minimize possible adverse effects. Case managers should assist in making appropriate arrangements for continuation of services when necessary.

(c) Case managers who anticipate the termination or interruption of services to clients should notify clients promptly and seek the transfer, referral, or continuation of services in relation to the clients' needs and preferences.

(d) Case managers who are leaving an employment setting should inform clients of appropriate options for the continuation of services and the benefits and risks of the options.

3. Case Managers Ethical Responsibilities to Colleagues

3.01 Respect

Case managers should treat colleagues with respect and should represent accurately and fairly the qualifications, views, and obligations of colleagues.

3.02 Confidentiality

Case managers should respect confidential information shared by colleagues in the course of their professional relationships and transactions. Case managers should ensure that such colleagues understand case managers' obligation to respect confidentiality and any exceptions related to it. The general expectation that case managers will keep information confidential does not apply when disclosure is necessary to prevent serious, foreseeable, and imminent harm to a client or other identifiable person.

3.03 Interdisciplinary Collaboration

Case managers who are members of an interdisciplinary team should participate in and contribute to decisions that affect the well-being of clients by drawing on the perspectives, values, and experiences of the case work profession. Professional and ethical obligations of the interdisciplinary team as a whole and of its individual members should be clearly established.

3.04 Consultation

Case managers should seek the advice and counsel of colleagues whenever such consultation is in the best interests of clients.

3.05 Referral for Services

Case managers should refer clients to other professionals when the other professionals' specialized knowledge or expertise is needed to serve clients fully or when case managers believe they are not being effective or making reasonable progress with clients and that additional service is required.

4. Case Managers' Ethical Responsibilities in Practice Settings

4.01 Continuing Education and Staff Development

Case manager administrators and supervisors should take reasonable steps to provide or arrange for continuing education and staff development for all staff for whom they are responsible. Continuing education and staff development should address current knowledge and emerging developments related to case work practice and ethics. Case managers in the Oklahoma City metro area should strive to participate in REACH, a collaborative training and network of area case managers.

5. Case Managers' Ethical Responsibilities as Professionals

5.01 Discrimination

Case managers should not practice, condone, facilitate, or collaborate with any form of discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, political belief, religion, or mental or physical disability.

5.02 Dishonesty, Fraud, and Deception

Case managers should not participate in, condone, or be associated with dishonesty, fraud, or deception.

5.03 Impairment

Case managers should not allow their own personal problems, psychosocial distress, legal problems, substance abuse, or mental health difficulties to interfere with their professional judgment and performance or to jeopardize the best interests of people for whom they have a professional responsibility.