Handout 1: What is Case Management?

Case Management is a planned approach to service delivery. The case management process is traced from the intake interview to termination. It enables agencies to help people whose lives are unsatisfying or unproductive due to the presence of many problems, which require assistance from several helpers at once.

Case Management has a dual emphasis. On the one hand it concentrates on developing or enhancing a resource network. A resource network is the loose organisation of persons which is unified by the common desire to help a specific client and whose activities are coordinated by the Case Manager. On the other hand, Case Management concentrates on strengthening the personal competence of the client to obtain resources and to use the resource network. Personal competence encompasses the client's knowledge, skills and attitudes.


The benefits of using a Case Management approach for the client include:

1. Improved coordination of services
2. Improved service outcomes
3. Increased empowerment of clients by involving them in the problem solving
4. Increased involvement in decision making and service provision
5. Increased access to services
6. Increased worker accountability

For service providers there are also a number of benefits. These include:

1. Shared responsibility for client outcomes among a number of worker and service providers
2. Sharing of responsibilities with clients reduces the burden upon workers and empower clients
3. Reduced worker burnout
4. Workers have a better sense of the direction they are taking on behalf of their clients
5. Interactions between clients and workers are more focussed
6. Improved coordination results in service gaps becoming more apparent

The Three Roles of the Case Manager
To accomplish all these benefits, the Case Manager has three functions: coordinator, advocate, and counsellor.

**Coordinator**

In this capacity, the Case Manager assesses the client’s problems and the need for assistance from other helpers. She develops a plan and then assists the client in making effective contacts with these helpers. When necessary, the Case Manager may also facilitate communication among the helpers to reduce conflict and increase the effectiveness of the resource network.

**Advocate**

Sometimes, needed resources are not present or are withheld from a specific client. As an advocate, the Case Manager works to make needed assistance available. At other times, society makes demands that are overwhelming to a client. In these instances, the Case Manager acts as an advocate to moderate the demands or to lessen the cost of not meeting the demands. The Martin family is a good example.

**Counsellor**

As a counsellor, the Case Manager's job is to teach the client what he needs to know to develop and maintain a resource network for himself. Sometimes a client needs new knowledge or skills. Sometimes, clients need to learn new things about themselves. The Case Manager develops a relationship with the client which permits an examination of dysfunctional patterns in the client's behaviour and facilitates the development of more useful patterns.

Ballew and Mink (1986) "Case Management in the Human Services".