

Introduction

State and federal regulations and NYSCB policy requires that certain information be contained in each participant's case record. The extent of this information varies in relation to where the participant is in the VR process. The purpose of this chapter is to provide general guidelines for maintaining a case record. NYSCB uses an electronic case management system (CIS) to manage a participant's case record.

What is the Case Record

The case record is a compilation of forms, reports, case notes and other documents related to a participant's involvement with NYSCB. The case record provides written documentation of a participant's progress through the VR process.

What is not Part of the Case record

Supervisory notes to a VR counselor and information not specifically related to the participants VR program are not part of the case record and should not be entered in the case record. This includes information about or names of other staff members or participants. Emails must never be included in the case record. Information that you send or receive in an email that is relevant to a participant's VR program should be summarized in a case note.

Why Case Notes are Important

Case notes are an essential component of the case record. They provide an overview of the participant's involvement in the VR program as well as justification for the employment goal, the services to be provided and case closure. Specifically, case notes provide

1. information to track a participant's progress through the VR process and should provide information to enable anyone who reads the case record to understand what is currently happening, what has happened and what is planned;
2. information for supervisors when authorizations for services and equipment need to be approved and to justify the appropriateness of expenditures;
3. information for supervisors and quality assurance reviewers to assess compliance with VR and fiscal policies and procedures; and

4. information and support for a decision that is being appealed by a participant.

When to Write a Case Note

Case notes should be entered in a participant's case record at least every three months. Additional case notes should be entered as needed to reflect changes in the participant's VR program, to document any issues that interfere with the participant's progress and to justify expenditures for college training, equipment and other significant purchases.

To avoid duplication, information is to be included as a case note only if it is not documented elsewhere in the case record. If the information is included elsewhere, a reference to its location in the case note is sufficient.

Case Notes in CIS

A case note can be entered as a free-standing document or as a case note footer at the bottom of a form in CIS. When entered at the bottom of a form, the case note will appear both as a separate document in the case record and at the bottom of the form.

To assist with finding information in the case record, the description field should always be completed either from one of the descriptions in the available pick list or by entering free text that best describes the content of the case note.

General Guidelines for Writing Case Notes

It is always important to carefully consider the information written into any part of the case record and particularly when writing case notes. The contents of the case record can become public through an appeal, in response to a participant's request to obtain a copy of information in their case record or through a subpoena by an attorney.

The following general guidelines apply to case noting:

1. Document important events and developments such as movement through the VR process, medical problems, progress toward achievement of the participants IPE goal and objectives, placement related efforts and activities and other significant events.

CASE RECORD DOCUMENTATION

14.00.03

2. Document ongoing vocational counseling and focus upon the purpose and outcome of the counseling session and the actions to be taken by the VR counselor and participant prior to the next contact.
3. Provide the rationale for providing services or equipment; don't just record that an authorization has been approved.
4. Record observations of the participant in behavioral statements, do not include subjective comments and do not use medical or psychological labels.
5. Reference forms and reports (e.g., medical, training) that are in the case record to reduce duplicating information that appears elsewhere in the case.
6. Record planning efforts and outcomes, not only what has happened.

Required Case Record Information

The VR regulations and federal reporting account for a large part of what needs to be documented in the case record. Information required for federal reporting is incorporated in the case record through specific data fields some of which include federally prescribed pick lists. Additional information required by VR regulations is typically documented through case notes entered by the VR counselor, through documentation of eligibility, the IPE and documentation at case closure.

The VR regulations require that the following information be documented in the case record:

1. If an applicant has been determined eligible for VR services, documentation supporting the eligibility decision
2. If an applicant or eligible individual receiving services under an IPE is determined to be ineligible, documentation supporting the ineligibility determination
3. The justification for closing an applicant's or eligible individual's case record if that closure is based on reasons other than ineligibility, including, as appropriate, documentation indicating that the state unit has satisfied the requirements for closing a participant's case as ineligible for VR services
4. If an individual has been determined to be an individual with a significant disability or an individual with a most significant disability, documentation supporting that determination

CASE RECORD DOCUMENTATION

14.00.04

5. Documentation to support the need for trial work to determine eligibility and documentation of the periodic assessment during trial work to assess the applicant's ability to work
6. An IPE and any amendments that meet the requirements in Chapter 6.00, Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)
7. Documentation describing the extent to which the applicant or eligible individual exercised informed choice in accordance with the requirements in Section 1.05, Informed Choice
8. If a participant's IPE provides for VR services in a non-integrated setting, a justification to support the need for the non-integrated setting
9. For participants who obtain competitive integrated employment, verification that the participant is compensated at or above the minimum wage and that their wage and level of benefits are not less than that customarily paid by the employer for the same or similar work performed by non-disabled individuals
10. If a participant is closed as unsuccessful as a result of obtaining non-competitive employment, documentation of the results of the semi-annual and annual reviews in accordance with Chapter 15.00, Semi-Annual and Annual Review of Individuals in Extended Employment
11. If a participant requests an appeal, documentation concerning any action or decision resulting from the request
12. If a participant requests that documentation in the case record be amended and the request is denied, documentation of the request
13. If a participant is referred to another program through "information and referral" services, documentation on the nature and scope of services provided by NYSCB and information about the referral
14. If the participant successfully exits the VR program, documentation that demonstrates the services provided under the IPE contributed to the achievement of the employment outcome and that the employment outcome meets the requirements for successful case closure as outlined in Chapter 2.00, The Vocational Rehabilitation Process

Case Status Specific Documentation Guidelines

Applicant - Status 02

Using the information obtained from the initial interview, the referral source, and other sources, write an intake case note that includes the following information:

1. Disability
 - a. The applicant's primary disability and any other disabilities, the resulting functional limitations, how the disability(ies) impact obtaining employment and any other relevant information
 - b. Any additional medical information needed to determine eligibility for VR services
 - c. The applicant's preferred format for receiving written materials using the Preferred Format form in the VR Intake packet and enter the preferred format on the applicant's Demographic form or the VR Intake form in CIS
2. Social Information
 - a. Pertinent information regarding the individual's family and home environment
3. Financial Information
 - a. If services contingent on economic need are expected, identify whether the applicant is eligible for items contingent upon economic need
 - b. Comparable benefits which are or may be available
 - c. Other financial resources such as Plan to Achieve Self Support (PASS) and the Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) account
4. Education and Work History
 - a. Educational background
 - b. Vocational training
 - c. Previous work experience and length of employment
 - d. Specific work skills
 - e. Reason for not being employed
5. The applicant's perception of their disability(ies), needs, and challenges past work experience and future goals

6. The VR counselor's observations of the applicant and their disability(ies)
7. The applicant's understanding of the VR process and motivation and interest in obtaining employment
8. If an eligibility decision cannot be made within the required 60-day timeframe, document the reason for an extension. This should be entered in a case note with the description: Extension of Eligibility Determination

Trial Work - Status 06

Write a case note that identifies the need for trial work to determine the applicant's eligibility for services and the plan for obtaining trial work opportunities.

Document that the plan for trial work has been discussed with the applicant and that the applicant understands and agrees to proceeding with trial work.

Closed from Applicant or Trial Work - Status 08

1. When closing a case in Status 08 after attempts to contact the applicant to gather information to determine eligibility have not been successful, document attempts to reach the applicant or the applicant's representative.
2. When closing a case in Status 08 because the applicant declines to participate in VR services, document the declination.
3. When closing a case in Status 08 because the applicant is ineligible for VR services, document the reasons for the determination, that the closure decision has been discussed with the applicant and that the applicant has been notified of the reason for the closure, the appeals process and the availability of the Client Assistance Program in accordance with the guidelines in Section 1.04, Client Assistance Program (CAP).
4. When closing a case in Status 08 after trial work, document the efforts to explore the applicant's capabilities and capacity to perform in competitive integrated work situations through trial work. Also document that the closure decision has been discussed with the applicant and that the applicant has been notified of the reason for the closure, the appeals process and the availability of the Client Assistance Program in accordance with the guidelines in Section 1.04, Client Assistance Program (CAP).

Eligibility and Development of the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) – Status 10

1. Document any additional information regarding eligibility that is not included in the Determination of Eligibility form or the intake summary.
2. Document any other vision related medical information or other medical information that is relevant to the development of the IPE.
3. Document the need for any additional medical, educational, social or vocational information prior to developing the IPE and how that information will be obtained.
4. Document the basis for the participant's vocational goal, why the planned services are needed to achieve that goal and any other relevant information to support the IPE.
5. Document the participant's work readiness skills and identify training to be provided to improve skills if needed

Pre-employment Transition Services - Potentially Eligible

Students that are potentially eligible for Pre-ETS services are those students that have a documented disability (legal blindness) and have not yet applied or been determined eligible for VR services. Documentation should consist of the following:

1. Student's name
2. Social security number (if available)
3. Unique identifier (if available)
4. Date of Birth
5. Race (if in elementary or secondary education)
6. Ethnicity (if in elementary or secondary education)
7. Student with a disability (indicate if the student has a 504 plan or an IEP)
8. Start date of pre-ETS services
9. The pre-ETS services provided

Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) Implementation – Status 18

1. Document the participant's progress toward meeting the objectives in the IPE and toward achieving the IPE goal by providing information about the services received and any issues associated with service provision.
2. If the participant's goal is amended, provide the rationale for the change.
3. If there are significant changes in the services to be provided, document the changes and the reason for the changes.
4. Document justification for purchasing equipment, explaining why the equipment is needed and how it will enable the participant to achieve his/her vocational goal.

5. Additional requirements for participants in Supported Employment can be found in Section 12.02, Supported Employment.

Ready for Employment – Status 20

1. Document that all planned services have been completed or if not, why they were not needed.
2. Document activities related to assisting the participant with the job search including information about any referrals to placement providers and/or to a career center.

In Employment – Status 22

1. Document the participant's progress on the job or any problems the participant is facing and attempts at resolution.
2. Obtain wage information at employment by sending the Verification of Employment form to the employer.

Closed Rehabilitated – Status 26

1. Document that the participant has achieved an employment outcome consistent with their IPE and that they have maintained satisfactory employment for at least 90 days and no longer needs VR services.
2. Document any need for post-employment services and that the participant has been notified of the availability of post-employment services.
3. Document that the reason for the decision, the appeals process and the availability of assistance from the Client Assistance Program was discussed with the participant.

Closed, Other Reasons After IPE Initiated – Status 28**Closed, Other Reasons Before IPE Initiated – Status 30**

1. Document the reason for the case closure.
2. Document that prior to case closure, the reason for the decision; the appeals process and the availability of assistance from the Client Assistance Program were discussed with the participant.

3. Document that an ineligibility review has been scheduled within one year of closure if the participant's case is being closed based on a determination that the participant is incapable of achieving an employment outcome.
4. Document that a review of a participant closed in extended employment has been scheduled.

Receiving Post-Employment Services – Status 32

1. Document the reason for the provision of post-employment services and how the post-employment services that have been identified on the IPE will enable the participant to retain their job.

Post-Employment Services Completed - Employment Maintained – Status 34

1. Document how post-employment services enabled the participant to retain their job and whether any additional post-employment services are anticipated in the future.
2. Document that prior to case closure, the reason for the decision; the appeals process and the availability of assistance from the Client Assistance Program (CAP) were discussed with the participant.

Post-Employment Services Discontinued - Case Reopened – Status 36

Post-Employment Services Discontinued - Other Reasons – Status 40

1. Document the outcome of the post-employment services and why the post-employment services have been discontinued including the rationale for reopening or not reopening the participant's case.
2. Document that prior to case closure, the reason for the decision, the appeals process and the availability of assistance from the Client Assistance Program (CAP) was discussed with the participant.