



*Practice Issues

Chapter 6

- * How can the quality of records in our agency be improved?
- * The quality of a record depends on the quality of thought and action that go into service delivery.
- * Records can be no better than the practice they document.

* The Quality of Records

* How can the quality of records in our agency be improved?

* Good practice is a prerequisite of good recording, but good practitioners do not always prepare good records.

* One issue on which social workers sometimes disagree is the focus of the record.

* The Quality of Records

* How can the quality of records in our agency be improved?

* Should records be complete or selective

* Objective or subjective

* Descriptive or analytic

* Should records concentrate on the client-need-situation, the service transaction or

* **The Quality of
Records**

* How can the quality of records in our agency be improved?

* The worker's diagnostic thinking?

* **The Quality of
Records**

- * A good report should:
 - * Focuses on service delivery
 - * Contains information about the client-need-situation and available resources that form the basis for assessment, intervention, and evaluation

* The Quality of Records

- * Contains information about decisions and actions at each phase of service, including its purpose, goals, plans, processes, progress, and outcomes
- * Carefully documents and labels the worker's appraisal, as well as the descriptions, observations, sources, and criteria on which it is based

*The Quality of Records

- * Is structured so that information can be documented, retrieved, and used efficiently;
- * Is used not just in accountability but to support practice.
- * Records are concise, specific, relevant, clear, logical, timely, meaningful, useful, and grounded in fact, professional ethics, and established theory and research.

*The Quality of Records

* Improving records may require action at four levels.

- * Practitioner skills
- * Agency guidelines
- * Supportive resources
- * Organizational atmosphere.

* The Quality of
Records

- * Even the most skilled practitioners can often improve their records if they prepare systematically.
- * Systematic preparation for recording takes place before, during, and after each encounter with or on behalf of a client.

* Improving Practitioner Skills

- * Technical errors. Spelling grammar etc.
- * Problem in diction. That is the use of language, meaning of using the right words.
- * Oversimplification.

* Improving
Practitioner Skills

- * In general, guidelines should make clear
 - * What types of records to keep, and what is their purpose and use
 - * What information to document in all cases, and what information to document only in special circumstances

* Improving Agency Guidelines

- * What forms or formats to use, and under what circumstances to use them
- * When specific elements of content are to be documented, and how frequently records are to be updated.

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* Improving Agency Guidelines

- * First and foremost, workers need enough time to prepare records.
- * Many social workers feel they do not have the time needed to complete their records...even with the help of computers and assistance.
- * Limited funds is an issue

* Improving Resources

- * Cut backs limits resources
- * Even with limited funds available, agencies can reduce the backlog of recordkeeping by redirecting resources to the task.
- * Developing forms for documentation of routine or short - term services

* Improving Resources

- * Studying recordkeeping practices to determine actual and optimal use of professional time
- * Purchasing or upgrading computer hardware and software and other time-saving devices
- * Adding or redeploying support personnel
- * Increasing practitioners' access to computers and other time-saving devices.

* Improving Resources

- * If records are to improve, the culture of the organization may also need to change.
- * The atmosphere surrounding any discussion of recording should be supportive rather than accusatory, reinforcing strengths and efforts at improvement rather than looking for weakness and lapses in performance.

Improving the Organization's Atmosphere

- * Practitioners, too, contribute to the agency's atmosphere.
- * The role of the record in practice also contributes to the agency atmosphere.

Improving the
Organization's
Atmosphere

*Question: *I have been told that the process of recording is helpful to practice and the practitioner. I find it tedious work. How can it be helpful?*

*It allows the worker to think back, think ahead, and think again.

*Benefits of the Recording Process

- * Recording involves *selection* - research material
- * Recording requires *substantiation* of fact, decision, and action.
- * Recording involves *analysis* - separating the whole into parts
- * Recording involves *synthesis* - making connections between observations and inferences

* Benefits of the Recording Process

- * Recording may involve *classification* - the worker typifies the client-need-situation and compares it with others in the light of theory, values, empirical evidence, and accepted practices.
- * Recording involves *judgment* and there can facilitate critical thinking.
- * Records should be written shortly after service events and continuously monitor the client-need-situation.

* Benefits of the Recording Process

* *I've seen some reports of client recordkeeping.*

How does this work?

* Clients can often benefit from writing down their thoughts and actions. Called client *memoranda* here to differentiate them from the client records.

* **Records That Clients
Prepare**

- * Reflection
- * Two forms; diaries and logs
- * Diary is open ended
- * Log more structural
- * Should client memoranda be used?
 - * With permission

* Records That Clients Prepare

- * The decision to use client memoranda should be based primarily on whether they will be meaningful to the client and can contribute to the service process.
- * Logs-how should they be used?
 - * Logs are particularly useful in assessing contingencies of behavior, changes in the client-need-situation, and the effects of service.

***Records That Clients Prepare**

- * Where is the diary or log kept
 - * Practitioners should inform clients from the outset whether their memoranda will appear in the agency record and in what form.
 - * Most often clients keep possession of their diaries
 - * Diaries do appear in the agency record; practitioners may describe some of the diaries content on how it is used in the service process.

*** Records That Clients Prepare**

- * Logs are then used along with other information to identify changes and track movement in the client-need-situation.

***Records That Clients
Prepare**

* *What records do I need to keep for my private practice?*

* Most private practitioners today, however, keep more comprehensive records, documenting on going assessments and monitoring services and their impact over time.

* Assessments of the client-need-situation, with DSM diagnoses, if appropriate

* Recordkeeping in Private Practice

- * Description of the service approach, with the rationale for its selection
- * Decisions and actions taken that affect services or the client-need-situation, including those by the client, worker, funders, and other interested parties
- * Service goals and plans, with timelines

* Recordkeeping in Private Practice

- * Indicators of movement, with systematic documentation of selected measures
- * Any change in approach, goals, or plans, with the rationale for the change
- * Appointment logs

* Recordkeeping in Private Practice

- * Full documentation of any critical event, such as a threat of violence, with the practitioner's response and action taken
- * Status of the client-need-situation at closing, with reasons for terminations, and any referral or follow-up
- * Efforts to ensure that clients who need continuing services are not abandoned but receive services elsewhere.

* Recordkeeping in Private Practice

- * Private Practitioner should have a colleague as a back-up

* Recordkeeping in Private Practice

- *What kind of records do I need for clients who are covered under manage care?
- *Manage care provides entities that give oversight in the day to day practice decisions.
- *More reports may be required

*Records and Managed Care

- * Managed care places some restrictions on practitioners' discretion in decision making and action taking. Practitioners may be constrained as to the method, length, and focus of services delivered on behalf of the clients.

* Records and Managed Care

- * Practice guidelines are recommendations regarding the most effective and efficient methods for delivering service.
- * Practice guidelines are usually developed from research findings and practice expertise, and are organized around specific diagnoses.
- * <http://www.web.ncqa.org>

* Practice Guidelines

- *Records under managed care are subject to full review by the MCO, contracting agency, or authorized entity.
- *What should be included, page 195-197

*Inclusion of Specific Information

- * Computers and clerical support are crucial to social work practice under manage care.
- * Computers can be used to ensure that crucial information about clients and services is properly documented, and to transfer this information to various forms and reports.

* Computers and Clerical Support

* Clerical support can also improve record management and be cost-effective.

* **Computers and
Clerical Support**