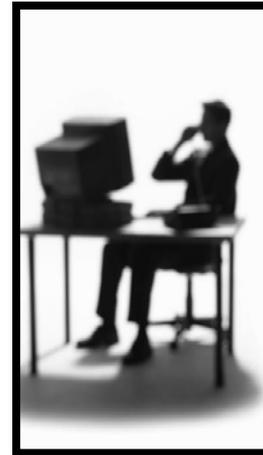


Guide to Effective Documentation and Case Notes for Employment Services



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Introduction

This guide provides instructions for Employment Services Providers on how to document information in a manner appropriate with fiscal review audit requirements, as well as optimize documentation in case planning, assessments, and other employment services work functions. When completed, you will be able to identify pertinent data to include in case records; organize information in a clear, concise manner; and record summarized assessment outcomes, employment plans, and other supporting data into your client's case record.

Case notes are used to manage your case but can also be used in appeals and other professional assessments. It is important that documentation be done in an objective and fact-based manner, with the understanding that records may be reviewed and used by other employment services counselors and professionals, including county attorneys, service providers (therapists, doctors, psychologists), and other professionals.

The information in this Case Notes Guide for Employment Services is best when used in conjunction with the [MFIP Work Activity Daily Supervision, Documentation and Verification Guide](#).

Why are good case notes so important?

- ✓ **Represent the client situation.** Case notes recount the story, meaning the client's history, present circumstances, reflections, and actions.
- ✓ **Provide a record.** Case notes provide a documentation of the services provided, including a record of the interaction between the client and the worker. Provides Documentation – leaves a “paper trail.” Provides verification of activities
- ✓ **Support an action.** The information found in case notes can justify why certain actions are necessary or considered most effective.
- ✓ **Improves case management.** Keeps you focused on what you are working on with the family. Helps the next worker, co-workers and supervisors.



Paper files:

Include the following items in the MFIP/DWP ES case file.

- ✓ Notice of Requirement to attend MFIP Overview (DHS-2929-ENG). (If the overview is being scheduled by income maintenance staff, this does not necessarily need to be in the ES file.) Case note to document that the overview was held.
- ✓ [Employment Services Responsibilities, Rights and Consent \(DHS-3172-ENG\)](#) and [Release of Information](#) forms.
- ✓ Case notes that are not electronically stored on WF1.
- ✓ Signed copies of the MFIP/DWP Employment Plan(s) (DHS-4209A-ENG) and EP revisions.
- ✓ Assessment materials and test scores, MFIP Self Screen, MFIP Self Screen Scoring Form, Brief Screening Tool for Special Learning Needs and Brief Screening Tool for Special Learning Needs Scoring Form, and the DWP/MFIP Observation Checklist.
- ✓ Medical, psychological, and other pertinent data collected.
- ✓ Verification of activity hours contained in the EP and entered on WF1.
- ✓ MFIP Notice of Intent to Sanction (NOITS) (DHS-3175-ENG) *unless documented in WF1* and other communication such as the Status Update.
- ✓ Any documents needed for an external or internal fiscal review or audit.

Case Note Content Outline

Subject

- Date of the event (in WF1 the entry date will auto-fill)
- Type of activity (ex. “counseling and guidance” or “job search” can be found in the drop-down box on WF1).
- Type contact or meeting (ex. “phone” or “in person” can be found in the subject drop-down box on WF1). If it is a meeting, note where the meeting took place.

Body of the case note:

- Purpose of your contact: intake interview, creating/revising the employment plan, discussion of strengths, issues and barriers, discussion of an education plan, assisting with writing a resume, setting up an appointment, discussion of a sanction, etc.
- Content of Employment Overview and Initial Interview. Important parts of the discussion: goals; timelines that were established for these goals; participant concerns; and supports for the participant.
- Additional factors not documented elsewhere, such as names, ages of children and names of any other household members. Note: It is not necessary to document information in case notes if it has already been documented in another way. For example, the [Employment Services Responsibilities, Rights and Consent \(DHS-3172-ENG\)](#) form is signed by the participant, so it is not necessary to case note that this form was reviewed.



Case Notes: Keep in mind!



What should you include?

Per appeals judge and state monitors from TANF case file review observations.

- The date of the case note
- The name and role of the person making the note
- The name of the person contacted, their position and title
- The manner and purpose of the contact
- A factual description of the event
- Details of information provided verbally
- The purpose of and reasons for any decision or action
- Details of the decision made, proposed action or action already taken
- A reference to a policy or procedure allowing the decision or action.
- Participant has been informed of their rights and their rights have not been violated.
- Expectations for the participants have been realistic and obtainable/achievable.
- Recipient has received proper and timely notices.
- MFIP policies/statutory requirements are being followed.
- WF1 hours should match verified documentation.
- Daily supervision is properly documented.
- Proper use of activities.

STRONG VERBS TO USE:

Advised, Focused

Assessed, Identified

*Assisted,
Recommended*

Clarified, Referred

Confronted, Reflected

Counseled, Structure

Discussed, Summarized

Directed, Supported

Encouraged, Urged

ADA and Civil Rights Acts Guidelines

If access to a service was denied due to a disability or other circumstance – not providing and interpreter for a Deaf person or someone whom English is not first language – this

Civil Rights Act of 1964

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, provides that no person shall be subjected to discrimination on the basis of racial, ethnic, national and religious minorities, and women under any program or activity that receives Federal financial assistance.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990

The (ADA) protects the civil rights of people with disabilities. A wide range of people are covered, some examples are: people with physical conditions, people with mental illness, and people with learning disorders. The ADA addresses the following areas: Title I – Employment; Title II – Public Services; Title III – Public Accommodations; Title IV – Telecommunications; and Title V – Miscellaneous. See the MFIP Employment Services Manual, Appendix G, for more information. State monitors will be looking for appropriate use of interpreters for example. If a participant was offered an interpreter and refused, this would be important to document, otherwise it might be assumed no offer was made.

Employment Plans

EPs should include enough hours to meet participation requirements unless a compelling reason to do less is case-noted in participant's record. (ESM 7.3) The rationale for the number of hours in an employment plan should be documented in case notes. (ESM 7.6)

Case note other allowable activities on participant's employment plan:

- Frequency of the check-in meetings.
- Activity hours.
- All contacts with the participant.

***DOCUMENT PROPER
USE OF AND
SUPPORT OF ADA
AND CIVIL RIGHTS
ACTS***

Using the MFIP Work Activity, Daily Supervision, Documentation & Verification Guide

(Appendix E of the Employment Services manual)

Use this guide first and foremost to meet the TANF Regulations.

When a form is not completed correctly or is missing information, documentation or verification may be completed using case notes. For example, information about hours still need to be verified, but if it is done by phone, case notes are a good way to document how hours were verified and by whom. This can also be noted on activity logs.

For example, if your participant is in an uncompensated work experience activity, the following documentation and verification is required:

- Name of the worksite
- Hours participated
- Worksite supervisor
- Worksite supervisor's signature and phone number.



If your agency's activity log has only the worksite listed, the rest of the contact information should be put in a case note. A phone call to the supervisor confirming the activity log hours can be put in case notes or on the log itself.

Refer to the [MFIP Work Activity, Daily Supervision, Documentation and Verification Guide](#) (Appendix E) and the [MFIP Activity Guide Tip Sheet](#) for documentation and verification requirements.

Job Search Activity

One of the biggest areas of errors in the TANF Case File reviews identified is in job search. Many times, there is more happening that fits the documentation and verification standards than are documented.

Daily Supervision - Weekly Check-In

A weekly check-in must be documented in order for the case to meet the daily supervision requirements.

What to document:

- When contact is made with a responsible individual for verification,
- The date of your meeting with the participant
- What type of meeting was held (in person, on phone or other)
- The activity log was reviewed with the participant.
- All of the required information on the activity log was verified.

Acceptable documentation for the weekly check-in is a case note in the participant's file or documentation on the back of the job search form, in the agency use section. (ESM 9.18)

Sign the activity log attesting that the required information is contained on the activity log and the hours have been verified.

When daily supervision is not required, a general guideline for checking in with the participant is no less than monthly. If you have reason to check in less frequently, document the reason in a case note.

Weekly Check-in Examples:

Reviewed Linda's activity log. The most promising lead appears to be a receptionist position at Jim's chiropractic clinic. We'll follow up next week to see if she got called for an interview. Hours and activities are reasonable.

Linda talked about her job search for the last week. She completed several applications. She is hopeful she will hear from Jim's chiropractic clinic. She will turn in activity log in at Job Club on Thursday. *(Remember – These hours cannot be coded into WF1 until a job search log has been completed and signed by the participant.)*

Called Linda. We discussed her job search for the week. She completed several applications. She is hopeful she will hear from Jim's chiropractic clinic. She dropped the timesheet in the mail this morning.

Called Linda to check in on her job search for the week. There was no answer. Left message and asked for a return phone call.

Job Search Activity

Verification of a Job Contact

The job search log or case notes should include:

- ✓ Review and verification of activity hours contained in the EP and entered on WF1. Note whether the information contained on it was acceptable and the method used to verify the job contact. This includes:
 - Activity logs/attendance records
 - School attendance records
 - Uncompensated employment activities attendance records
- ✓ Copies of Status Updates generated by job counselor *unless documented in WF1*.
- ✓ Forms required for the Injury Protection Program
- ✓ Copies of On-The-Job Training (OJT) contracts or worksite agreements.

Refer to the MFIP Work Activity, Daily Supervision, Documentation and Verification Guide (Appendix E) and the MFIP Activity Guide Tip Sheet for more details on documentation and verification. If you talk to an employer to verify the job contact, sign the time sheet or attendance document and enter a case note in the participant's file. Please use as a last resort. There are many other easier and less intrusive ways to verify job contacts.

In cases where there is no date on the verification (on-line application, receipt, business card, etc.) that corresponds with a job contact on the activity log, a case note should be used to tie the documentation with the verification or job contact.

There is a section on the back side of the job search log that a job counselor can complete to meet the job verification requirement. If this is complete, there is no need to further case note the verification of the job contact.

Training and Education

If the employment services provider contacts an instructor, a case note should be included in the participant's file. (ESM 9.33)

Other Excused Absences (OEA) for Participants in Education and Training Activities: Case note the reason for the OEA and reference giving the participant an "Other Excused Absence" or "OEA" allowance for that day.

Participants in ABE, ESL, and FWL must submit a signed statement, attendance record from the instructor or group attendance sheet must be submitted no less than monthly. If the employment services provider contacts an instructor, a case note should be included in the participant's file.

The amount of study time that is accepted by the employment services provider must be documented on the activity log or in a case note.

Post-Secondary Vocational Educational Training (13+ months educational program)

The amount of study time that is accepted by the employment provider must be documented on the activity log or in a case note.

Jobs Skills Training Directly Related to Employment

Document on the activity log or in a case note:

- The amount of study time that is accepted by the employment provider.
- Satisfactory attendance at a secondary school.
- Courses leading to a certificate of general equivalence.
- How the attendance information is received -- by phone or otherwise.

Information must be entered as a case note and retained in the case file, or noted on the activity log and this indicated in the case notes.

Assessments: MFIP Self-Screen, Brief Screening Tool for Special Learning Needs, and the Observation Checklist

Document on the Observational Checklist or in a case note the reason you are requiring the participant to complete these tools prior to 6-weeks of job search. Only the “minimum necessary” information should be included and this should rarely include an actual diagnosis. (ESM 6.3.12)

- a. Capture relevant data elements.
- b. Present accurate customer “snap shot.”
- c. Deficiencies and barriers should link directly to services and activities.

When a participant discloses a medical, mental or chemical health condition but they do not have documentation to support the claim, information can be written on the Employability Measure or in a case note e.g. “participant stated she is feeling depressed, assisted participant in making an appointment for an assessment.”

Poor example...

“Participant provided documentation stating she has Major Depression and will be attending weekly therapy appointment with Dr. Johnson at ABC clinic. Her medical opinion form states her Major Depression does affect her current ability to obtain and maintain employment.”

Good example...

“Medical condition present that restricts activities, see case file.”

Another Good example...

“Participant states that she has been feeling depressed lately which has been affecting her job search. I assisted Participant in scheduling a mental health assessment with her primary medical clinic.” (participant disclosed information but no medical documentation to support)

Poor example...

“Client required to do a Mental Health Assessment.”

Good example...

“Met with participant to discuss job search activities, she has been job searching for 6 weeks and has not found suitable employment. Completed Self-Screen and Brief Screening Tool for Learning Disabilities, score on self-screen was 6. Participant agreed to take a professional assessment. Assisted in scheduling appointment.”

Holidays & Excused Absences

Case note the reason for the Other Excused Absence and reference giving the participant an “Other Excused Absence” or “OEA” allowance for that day. (ESM 9.48)

On WF1, hours should be tracked in the appropriate row. A corresponding case note should be written documenting the need. (ESM 9.48)

Workforce One (WF1): Record the OEA hours in the Excused row under the appropriate, corresponding activity (i.e. Job Search). A corresponding case note should be written documenting the reason.

Uncompensated Employment

When hours are verified by contacting the work site, an employment services staff person must sign the time sheet or attendance document and enter a case note in the participant’s file. (ESM 9.9)

The employment services provider must write a case note to document the verification of hours. (ESM 9.9)

Document the 90 day Employment Plan review in case notes.

When sending a status update to the financial worker a case note should be completed *unless the Status Update is in WF1*.

The participant’s activity log/time sheet should only include required work activity hours. The additional volunteer time should not be entered on an activity log/time sheet. In the event the participant records hours from the additional volunteer job on his/her time sheet, the employment counselor should identify the additional voluntary time, and record a case note to explain the additional hours; Do not time track these additional volunteer hours.

Poor example...

“Janie turned in activity log verifying 80 hours of uncompensated work for the month of January.”

Good example...

“Janie turned in activity log verifying 80 hours of uncompensated work activity for the month of January. Due to FLSA, Janie was only required to participate in 62 hours of uncompensated work activity. Due to her probation requirements Janie choose to do an extra 18 hours that were not in her Employment plan. Entered 62 hours of uncompensated work in WF1 for the month of January due to this.”

Community Service Program Placements

Employment Service Providers must enter a case note that describes the useful public purpose of the position and how the placement will improve the participant's employability.

For participants engaged in court ordered community service record the required hours in the employment plan and enter a case note that the hours in the plan are for court ordered community service.

An employment services provider that receives a statement or other document that is not signed by the participant who is participating in the community service program or other responsible individual must confirm with the participant in a community services program that the hours are correct in order for the hours to be countable. The employment services provider must write a case note to document the verification of hours.

Social Services

Acceptable documentation for the weekly check-in is a case note in the participant's file or an indication on the activity log that the check-in was satisfactorily completed for each/all activities. (ESM 9.42)

If you have reason to check in less frequently, document the reason in a case note. (ESM 9.42)

If the Employment Plan warrants less frequent contact, case note why less contact is required and how often the follow-up will occur. (ESM 9.42)

Do not require daily supervision if the participant is only engaged in Social Service activities and is not being tracked for Job Readiness in WF1 under "Job Search". Follow up with the participant no less than monthly. Review the Employment Plan at least every 3 months.

FSS Activities

Ensure that any contact with the participant is case noted. (Appendix E)

Professional MH or CD assessments, Employability Measure assessment, ES counselor's assessments, and/or case notes that assess participants for chemical health, mental health, physical health, child behavior, personal skills, childcare, dependent care, transportation, legal, safe living environment, housing, financial, education and social support (if information is in WF1, additional documentation in paper file is not necessary).

Transition Period – 48 to 60 Months

Prior to the face-to-face meeting, document completion of the administrative review of the MFIP case. Document every attempt to meet face-to-face meeting with the participant(s). (ESM 13.6)

Holding – Holding, Sanction – Holding, child under 12 months

Document in case notes why the Holding activity is being used. (ESM 9.45.3) This is only used for the child under one exemption.

Sanctions

Record in case notes all contact with the participant and the outcome of team meetings dealing with the sanctioned participant. (ESM 14.36)

NOITS should be created in WF1 when possible. When a NOITS is created in WF1, a case note is automatically created in WF1. When a manual NOITS (DHS-3175) is created and sent, case note the contents of the NOITS and the date sent.

Copies of the Notice of Intent to Sanction should be in the case as well as any other supporting case notes documenting the reason for the sanction. Attempts to contact the participant to discuss how to cure the sanction should also be documented in case notes. (ESM 9.45.3)

Here is an example of what an auto-generated NOITS case note looks like. The text in italics indicates worker-entered information that can be added according to the situation.

For FSS sanctions, each step of the FSS Pre-Sanction Checklist process must be documented in the case notes. (ESM 14.9)

MFIP NOITS

If you do not act, your MFIP grant will be reduced or closed because you did not:

Do the activities in your plan: ***Supporting documentation for health conditions was not turned in to EC by deadline.***

Act Now! To stop a sanction:

Call your job counselor/case manager before ***06/06/2013***. Meet with your job counselor/case manager on ***06/06/2013 at 10:30 am***.

Other Actions: Complete by ***06/06/2013***.

1. Turn in supporting documentation for health condition to employment counselor by 6/11/2013. A medical opinion form is enclosed.

2. Review employment plan.

Documenting Conditions

Watch for misleading, non-specific wording. Try to describe rather than judge. It's harder than you think! Put this information on an Observational Checklist, especially if you are seeing patterns develop.

The following phrases below are commonly used by ES workers to describe situations and/or participants. These phrases are *conclusions*, *not descriptions*, of what has been seen and/or heard.

"...he did well in the workshop today"

"...she is resistant"

"...his appearance was messy"

"...she was mean to her children"

"...the children were wild"

"...he is verbally abusive"

"...she is hostile"

"...he is controlling"

"...the house was dirty"

Poor example:

"Chris was obviously nervous."

Good example:

"Chris was biting his nails and shifting in his seat."

Poor example:

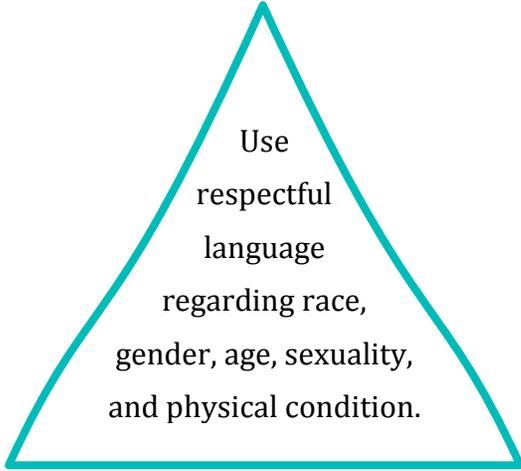
"Lynn seemed drunk."

Good example:

"Lynn appeared to be under the influence as evidenced by slurred speech and staggered walk."

Nonjudgmental Writing

Instead of:	Say:
Lazy -----	Shows little motivation
Stubborn -----	Resistant or determined
Foul-mouthed -----	Uses profanity
Just sits there -----	Shows passive behavior



Poor example:
“She looks and smells like she hasn’t bathed in days.”

Good example:
“Participant wore jeans with mud on them. Participant had dirt under her fingernails and her hair was greasy and unkempt.”

Poor example:
“Pat is a 26 year old handicapped woman.”

Good example:
“Pat is a 26 year old woman with a disability.”

What to avoid

What you should avoid:

- Avoid “diagnoses”
- Avoid “Clichés”
- Avoid “street talk”
- Avoid Jargon
- Avoid Stereotypes and prejudices

Words to avoid...

- Abnormal Impulsive
- Abusive Irrational
- Anxious Overwhelmed
- Dangerous Resistant
- Delusional Suicidal
- Demanding Threatened
- Disturbed Troubled
- Hysterical Uncooperative
- Immature Unfit

Poor example:

“Met with Jackie yesterday and developed a new plan. Checked with the county and if she would go into sanction for 7/11, she would hit her permanent closure status. I decided to cure her sanction and give her 1 more chance. Made a deal with her that if she can go to school, work, and do everything she needs to work the program, she will be in good standing with me. But, if she fails even the smallest thing, I will put her back into sanction and her case will close forever. Still looking for childcare. Ripped her for not complying for the last 50 months and told her to start over now! EP good for 1 month and we will see how she does.”

Good example:

“Met with Jackie yesterday (mm/dd/yy) and developed a new plan. We discussed the possibility of her going into sanction for Sept. if she does not comply with this new plan and that it would be her 7th month of sanction or 100% MFIP closure (participant can always reapply for MFIP if they have not used their 60 months). New plan is good for one month and finding child care is her main priority.”

Scenario: Sherry

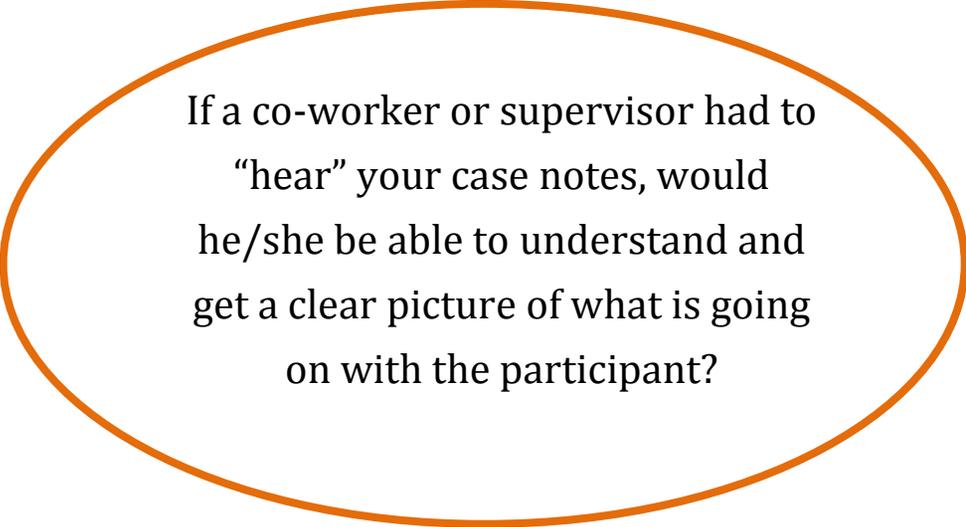
Your MFIP participant, Sherry, came 20 minutes late to job club today. In your agency, when participants are over 10 minutes late, they do not get credit for attending. When you told your participant that you would not be able to count her as attending Job Club, she got mad at you, yelled about her child having a doctor appointment and left. You tried to talk to her about Good Cause, but she left too quickly. You suspect she doesn't have a doctor's appointment since this is her typical behavior and you are frustrated.

Poor Case Note:

Sherry came to Job Club late as usual. I told her that you can't be late and get credit for coming. She told me her kid was at the emergency room. I think she is lying about this. She got mad at me and stormed off. I will call and talk to her about good cause if this isn't a lie.

Better Case Note:

Sherry came to Job Club 25 minutes late today. Our agency's policy is that if you are over 10 minutes late, you will not get credit for the class, was explained to her. In a loud and angry voice, Sherry said she was late because she had to bring her daughter to the emergency room. Sherry walked out before I could explain Good Cause. Verification from emergency room doctor will help determine if she had Good Cause and I will request this by phone tomorrow morning when I call Sherry.



If a co-worker or supervisor had to
“hear” your case notes, would
he/she be able to understand and
get a clear picture of what is going
on with the participant?

Scenario: Jenny

Intake appointment: You are meeting with Jenny. You have never met Jenny before, but know she is the sister of your other MFIP participant who is difficult, gets sanctioned a lot for not following through with her employment plan, and you suspect has a meth problem. For these reasons you were not looking forward to meeting Jenny. Jenny has already completed the overview and initial paperwork. You were told that she brought her baby to the overview. She still needs an Employment Plan and an Employability Measure interview, and doesn't have her baby with her when she arrives. Jenny comes to the appointment and seems to be really hyper. She talks fast, keeps getting out of her chair, looks at her cell phone, and seems generally distracted. Despite this behavior, she is quite pleasant and cooperative. Although, you are pleasantly surprised that she is nice, you are suspicious. She doesn't report any barriers besides being nervous about bringing her child to daycare. She reports that during this meeting, her mother is watching the baby and this is the first time she has ever been away from her baby. You write the employment plan to find daycare and start a 35 hour a week job search. When the meeting is over, she leaves quickly.

Poor Case Note:

Jenny came into the office today for an EM interview and to develop an employment plan. As we wrote the plan, she said she was worried about leaving her child in daycare. I gave her information for Childcare Resource and Referral to help her find childcare. I don't know if she has any intention of following the plan since she doesn't want to leave her child in daycare. The plan was written to include full-time job search. At the end of the meeting, Jenny ran out of the office. Jenny was acting so weird and hyper that I question whether she has a meth problem, which runs in the family.

Better Case Note:

Jenny came into the office today to complete her intake appointment and to write an employment plan. Jenny does not report any barriers to employment besides current lack of child care. Her plan was written to seek and obtain child care within three weeks and to start job searching 25 hours per week. Jenny said she is nervous about leaving her child with a daycare provider. I gave her information about Child Care Resource and Referral as well as our child care assistance program. Throughout our meeting, Jenny frequently checked her cell phone. She also got up and sat down in her chair 5 times. She answered all intake questions, but responded with rapid speech. Her behaviors today were documented on an Observational Checklist.

Abbreviations – be careful about using them!



DO NOT “TEXT” CASE NOTES.

“T/C CL LM BOUT
NC/NS NOITS”

Telephone call to client – left a message about their no call/no show. Sent them a NOITS.

“SP/W CL DOH
030310 1ST PD
032510”

Spoke with client. Date of Hire was 03/03/2010. They will receive their 1st paycheck on **03/25/2010**.

“GC APRD OFF
FIL'D”

Good Cause approved. Order for Protection filed.

FINAL REMINDERS

Refer to the [MFIP Work Activity, Daily Supervision, Documentation and Verification Guide](#) and the [MFIP Activity Guide Tip Sheet](#) for documentation and verification requirements.

Use respectful language regarding race, gender, age, sexuality, and physical condition.

**DOCUMENT
PROPER USE OF
AND SUPPORT
OF ADA AND
CIVIL RIGHTS**

If a co-worker or supervisor had to “hear” your case notes, would he/she be able to understand and get a clear picture of what is going on with the participant?

