

**FROM: Paper and Process – How Youth Programs Manage Program Intake, Individual Service Strategy Development & Case Files** ([www.doleta.gov/youth\\_services](http://www.doleta.gov/youth_services))  
Developed by *Callahan Consultants, Inc.* under contract to USDOL/ETA Office of Youth Opportunities

The publication was prepared based on info obtained from staff working in the following programs:

*Living Classrooms* - Baltimore, MD

*Crispus Attucks YouthBuild* - York, PA

*Civic Works* - Baltimore, MD

*The Career Academy* - Baltimore, MD

*Covenant House Youth Opportunities* - Washington, DC

*The Youth Opportunity Program* - Baltimore, MD

*Region 1 Youth Development Program* - Beckley, WV

## The Intake Process

- Gathering registration info is the least favorite activity and the least youth-friendly part of any program
- Case Management Systems and Management Information Systems (MIS) seldom integrated

### SUGGESTIONS:

- ✓ The Intake Process could be modeled on the Adult One-Stop approach, which allows for universal access to core services - eligibility isn't an issue. Simply referring non-eligible youth to other providers was viewed as contributing to non youth-friendly atmosphere.
- ✓ *Customer Check Lists* note the list of documents the young person must bring to the Center to help staff quickly determine eligibility; the young person has an opportunity to collect documents prior to intake session. (Baltimore YO Program - youth receive an "appt. card" that includes the person's name, contact info, time of appt. and name/number of the intake person; the reverse side has a list of acceptable documentation to show 1) SSN, 2) Age, 3) Address.
- ✓ Staff use staff mini tape recorders and are trained to gather intake/regis. info using the recorder. Tapes are then given to a contractor who completes the intake forms. Staff saw process as less intrusive and more youth-friendly (e.g., less interruption).

## The Assessment Process

- Most programs use an assessment tool to measure basic ed skills; to lesser degree, tools to measure life skills, occupational skills, and interests/aptitudes.

The *Ansell-Casey Life Skills Assessment* described as 'unique youth assessment instrument'

- ✓ Developed by the Casey Foundation, needs no permission for use, avail. FREE at [www.casey.org](http://www.casey.org)
- ✓ Evaluation of youth *independent living skills* (e.g., daily living tasks, housing/community resources, money mgt, self-care, social development, work/study habits)
- ✓ Two versions: One for youth to complete (as a self-assessment); One for caregiver to complete (as assessment of youth's life skills knowledge)
- ✓ Can be completed on-line, which 1) is more enjoyable for youth, and 2) provides staff with less confrontational approach to discuss personal issues

## The Individual Service Strategy (ISS)

- Two basic approaches - a *compliance approach* or an *integrated case management approach*
- An integrated case mgt approach uses the ISS process to manage service delivery; the ISS is intended as a service-planning tool, so making it part of the case mgt process is logical as well as effective
- Although the 'design' of forms varied, most of the processes were interestingly similar

## SUGGESTIONS:

- ✓ One process based on the 'Three Rs' - A regular **R**evue with youth of planned/accomplished goals; **R**efinement of existing goals and action plans; **R**etooling by changing directions as needed to reflect changing goals and growing awareness of further potential futures
- ✓ Some programs encouraged staff to help youth identify a *career pathway* - not a specific job, e.g., if a young person wants to be a nurse, staff encourage focusing on a career pathway, such as *Medical Profession*, which isn't as limiting and could include LPN, RN, or Nurse's Aid

## The Case File

-Many complaints about constructing/maintaining case files (need to work w/ partners, many funding sources, different eligibility rules and data requirements)

-Primary issue was "feeding" the info system while keeping paperwork at reasonable level

-Improving case files viewed from 3 perspectives: integrating paper/electronic files; organizing individual case folders; tips for maintaining accurate files.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR INTEGRATING FILES

**Forms Generation** - Use the electronic system to produce some of the forms for the paper case file (primarily intake & eligibility). Data collection/entry is done once into electronic system - no duplication, saves time. [Data entry errors less frequent when entering data directly instead of filling out form and then inputting the info.]

**Coding Crosswalks** - Use one uniform coding system for electronic *and* paper case filing systems. Each young person receives a photo I.D. card to associating them with a certain program (e.g., youth opportunity). The bar code on the card is read each time the youth receives services, so it not only provides a sense of belonging, it serves as a way of documenting youth participation in workshops, recreational activities, etc.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR ORGANIZING CASE FOLDERS

- ✓ Using a *case file template* as a 'Table of Contents' in the customer record. It provides a roadmap for staff on the forms/documents that need to be in the case file and where.
- ✓ Using a 'mock' customer case file that incl. copies of all forms/documents expected in an actual case record; the sample record is used to train staff on how to create/maintain a proper case record.
- ✓ *Regular & Routine Updating* is critical. Methods incl. policy that staff can't end the day until all critical info is put into the record; policy creating a 'records update' time (e.g., early before youth arrive); tape recorder for case managers, contracting the transcribing to another organization; staff equipped with laptops that contain customer records, enabling staff to record data for MIS needs reflecting the young person's progress - this approach incl. a number of features (e.g., incl. a directory of providers).

TIPS FOR ACCURATE FILES (Supervisors interviewed said taking good case notes & maintaining case files were critical skills often lacking in their case managers; staff training in note-taking, record keeping a must.)

- ✓ One program uses a 7-minute video of a young person being interviewed by a counselor; 3 different interviews at different times are presented; staff must pick out critical info (test listening/hearing skills) and record a case history (test recording skills), they use a transparency as their 'paper' and at end of video, each presents their notes to the group, allowing staff to see various styles.
- ✓ *Regular Random Selection Review* - A formal records review where the supervisor or reviewer gives the staff person a report on case file adequacy relative to, following file templates and case notes.
- ✓ *Team Peer Review* - Programs had regular review meetings involving a team of staff collectively reviewing records and services provided, and proactively critiquing the service approach. This produces better records *and* brings collective wisdom of the staff team to bear on improving service delivery.