Katrina Aid Today
A National Case Management Consortium

KAT Inactive Clients (Lost Contact):
What to do when contact can not be made

Why clients become inactive:

After a disaster, people seek case management services to help be linked to the benefits, providers, and services needed to assist them in meeting their most immediate needs. After their immediate needs have been met, many fail to return for the long term case management services that would help them work towards overcoming the long term barriers set in their way as a result of Hurricane Katrina. Some reasons clients do not return include:

- Client's immediate needs were met during the relief phases and/or with crisis intervention (no real or perceived need for additional or on-going assistance);
- Client's immediate needs are being met through "band-aid" interventions in a non-coordinated manner amongst community providers;
- Communication barriers such as lack of access to telephone and/or transportation, or language barriers;
- Pride/self-esteem;
- Fear or distrust;
- Withdrawal, depression, physical illness or other issue related to health and well-being;
- Survivor guilt – the notion that others are more "needy" or deserving;
- Relocation out of the agency's service area;
- Clients lack confidence in the quality or quantity of case management services and/or direct assistance;
- A recovery plan is not developed early in the client/worker relationship, and thus the client lacks understanding as to how the process can support him/her through to the recovery goal.

Re-Engaging Clients

Case managers who have lost contact with clients should attempt to re-engage the client. However, agency procedures must be in place to protect the balance between showing a good faith effort in locating clients and preventing case managers from spending too much time looking for clients that may not have an interest in receiving services.

KAT recommends that agencies develop policies and procedures specific to their own organization so that all clients are shown similar effort to re-engage them. Issues that may be considered when developing such policies and procedures are:

- staffing and caseload sizes
- standardized method of contact (phone/email/home visits)
- required search in CAN for potential updated information in case record
- preserving open case status for period of time as "inactive" (as opposed to an active case that has current progress and contact); and
- Verification from supervisor in the documentation of contact efforts.

Based on the agency's policies and procedures, once a decision to close a case for lack of contact, documentation should be made in the client's paper file and CAN record.

Documenting Inactivity

Documentation should take place in two places when a client becomes inactive; in the client's file and in CAN.

Client File:

1. Document on the client's progress notes what efforts were made to contact the client
2. Complete the Case Closure / Summary Form and Case Closure/Summary Form Addendum to the best of your ability:
   - *Case Status:* Check **Case Closed**
   - *Outcome:* Check the one that most closely represents the progress made toward the goal set forth in the recovery plan at the time of last contact with the client
   - *Reason for Case Closure:* Check **Other Reason for Case Closure; Reason: Lost Contact**
   - *Value of Assistance* Total of all assistance received up to the point of last contact with the client
   - *Have you made a decision where you will live permanently?* Based on case manager's knowledge of client's decision
3. Maintain client's record in case file cabinet as a closed case.

CAN:

1. Search CAN to see whether the client began working with another agency
   (Case Managers are required to contact prior case managers before they begin working with a case; however, this instruction was added in the event proper transfer procedures were not initially followed –Refer to Guidance #5 "Case Transfer").

2. Complete the following in the Case Management Section of CAN:
   - Enter the Date Case Closed
   - Change the Case Status to: **Closed**

3. Complete the following in the Additional Needs Section in CAN:
   - *What was the outcome [If Recovery Plan Developed]?* Check the one that most closely represents the progress toward the goal set forth in the recovery plan
   - *Reason for Case Closure:* Check **Other Reason for Case Closure**
   - *If there was another reason for closure, what was it?* **Lost Contact**
   - *NEW!* Needs met section in the Case Closure section of CAN

Clients that return for services after the case has been closed

When a case manager has closed a client's case for becoming inactive, and the client returns at a later date, continue the case management process.
Note: This would be an ideal time to readdress the benefit of continual communication between case manager and client until there is an agreement that the client's recovery goal has been adequately met or assistance is no longer needed.

Client File:

1. Since the paper client file was maintained by the agency at the time of case closure, documentation in the client file should resume as normal case management procedure dictates. Document in the client's progress notes that the client has returned and that case management will resume.

CAN:

1. Change the Case Status to: **Open** (do not use reopened)
2. Remove the Date Case Closed
3. Remove any field that was changed during the previous case closure *(Outcomes, Reason for Case Closure)*
4. Update the "*Support Consultation Narrative*" in CAN to document the client's return.

Note: Clients who have been reopened after an initial case closure due to inactivity and then closed again will have 2 case closure forms in their file. The 2nd and final case closure form supersedes any information collected on the initial form and CAN should be updated to reflect information from the 2nd case closure, including date case closed, case outcome, and reason for closure.