Case Notes: Service vs Update

Important Note: All service touchpoints recorded in the MIS database system **require** a case note. However, **not all** case notes require a service touchpoint to be recorded in the MIS database system.

Determining Whether a Case Note Describes a Service or a Status Update

The checklist below can be used to determine whether a case note documents a service or a status update. If a service occurred but most answers are "No," revise the note to clearly describe the service provided. If not, the note reflects a status update and should not be recorded as a service.

Question	Purpose	Service	Status Update
Did the case manager **take action** to support the participant?	Determines whether the note documents an actual service rather than only reporting what the participant said.	☐ **Yes**	☐ **No**
Is the action clearly connected to a reason (**why it was done**) *AND* does the case note document the **outcome of that action**?	Ensures the note shows the purpose/rationale and results of case management activity.	☐ **Yes**	☐ **No**
Does the case note include **next steps, follow-up, or a plan** showing continued case management?	Demonstrates active engagement and ongoing support.	☐ **Yes**	☐ **No**

Examples of Case Notes that are Services recorded in MIS but read as Status Updates

The examples below are real case notes recorded as services but read like status updates because the case manager's actions are not clearly documented. A status update mainly records information shared by the participant during a check-in. Meanwhile, a service provision case note must clearly describe what the case manager did, why it was done, and what the outcome or next steps are. Each example includes an explanation of why the case note reads as a status update, along with a revised version that demonstrates how to document the activity as a service-focused case note.

Example #1:

Career Planning: *Participant and I discussed their training, and they informed me that they needed to drop one of their classes to help relieve some stressors. They shared that their schedule is heavy with work, taking care of children and maintaining their home. They are determined to continue to do well in their remaining classes and I encouraged them to try to find a good balance of their time. Participant shares that their grades are struggling right now but because winter quarter just started, they are hopeful that they have plenty of time to get back on track.*

Why does this case note indicate a status update and not a service provision?

Question	Service	Status Update	Reasoning
Did the case manager **take action** to support the participant?	☒ **Yes**	☒ **No**	The case note mentions encouragement *("I encouraged them to try to find a good balance")*, but most of the content is participant reporting. The case manager's action is minimal.
Is the action clearly connected to a reason (**why it was done**) *AND* does the case note document the **outcome of that action**?	☐ **Yes**	☒ **No**	The purpose and outcome of the action is not clearly documented. The note does not clearly state *why* encouragement was given (e.g., to improve academic progress, reduce stress) or document the outcome of the action. The participant's statements dominate.
Does the case note include **next steps, follow-up, or a plan** showing continued case management?	☐ **Yes**	☒ **No**	There is no documented plan or follow-up by the case manager; the participant is expected to keep themselves on track.

Rewritten Service-Focused Version

Career Planning: *Today, I met with the participant to review their training progress and assess any challenges affecting their coursework. They reported needing to drop a class due to stress from work and family responsibilities. I provided guidance and encouragement to help them balance their remaining classes and discussed strategies to maintain academic progress. I will follow up next week to monitor progress and provide support as needed.*

Example #2:

Career Planning: *Participant and I discussed their training and they informed me that they had a video assessment for their sign language course. Participant shared their grades with me and they are making satisfactory progress at this time. They will keep me updated if there are any changes.*

Why does this case note indicate a status update and not a service provision?

Question	Service	Status Update	Reasoning
Did the case manager **take action** to support the participant?	☐ **Yes**	☒ **No**	The case note documents a discussion but does not show guidance, review, problem-solving, or intervention. Most content is participant reporting.
Is the action clearly connected to a reason (**why it was done**) *AND* does the case note document the **outcome of that action**?	☐ **Yes**	☒ **No**	There is no stated purpose for the discussion, and the outcome reflects only the participant's progress, not a result of case manager action.
Does the case note include **next steps, follow-up, or a plan** showing continued case management?	☐ **Yes**	☒ **No**	The case note mentions the participant will update the case manager if anything changes, but no proactive plan, follow-up, or monitoring from the case manager is documented.

Rewritten Service-Focused Version

Career Planning: *Today, I met with the participant to review their training progress and assess any challenges or support needs. They reported completing a video assessment for their sign language course and shared their grades. I confirmed satisfactory progress and provided guidance on strategies to maintain or improve performance. I advised the participant to notify me if any challenges arise and scheduled a follow-up check-in to monitor continued progress.*

Example #3:

Labor Market Information (Youth Only): *I discussed with the participant and their mother the progress they made in studying for their driving exam and GED test. They reported that the participant is still planning to obtain their driver's license but would like a little bit more time to study before scheduling the test. They will contact me once they feel ready to proceed. The participant successfully passed their GED test on June 5th and has officially obtained their diploma.*

Why does this case note indicate a status update and not a service provision?

Question	Service	Status Update	Reasoning
Did the case manager **take action** to support the participant?	☐ **Yes**	☒ **No**	The case note documents a discussion and participant progress, but no guidance, coaching, or intervention by the case manager is documented.
Is the action clearly connected to a reason (**why it was done**) *AND* does the case note document the **outcome of that action**?	☐ **Yes**	☒ **No**	While the GED completion is reported, it is the participant's achievement; the case manager's action or its impact is not documented.
Does the case note include **next steps, follow-up, or a plan** showing continued case management?	☒ **Yes**	☒ **No**	The case note mentions that the participant will contact the case manager when ready to schedule the driving test, but no proactive follow-up or monitoring plan is documented. The follow-up is participant-driven rather than planned by the case manager.

Rewritten Service-Focused Version

Labor Market Information (Youth Only): *Today, I met with the participant and their mother to review progress on preparing for the driving exam and GED test. I congratulated the participant on successfully passing the GED on June 5th and discussed strategies for preparing to schedule the driving test. We created a plan outlining study steps and a timeline for scheduling the test. I will follow up in two weeks to monitor progress and provide support as needed.*

Career Planning or Labor Market Information Services Action Verbs

The following verbs can be used in Career Planning or Labor Market Information (LMI) service case notes to describe the actions taken during interactions with a participant. Using action words helps clearly define the service provided by describing what the case manager did, why it was done, and what the outcome or next steps are. This list provides examples and is not exhaustive.

Service Description	Business Definitions for Service
Career Planning	The provision of a job seeker centered approach in the delivery of services, designed—(A) to prepare and coordinate comprehensive employment plans, such as service strategies, for participants to ensure access to necessary workforce investment activities and supportive services, using, where feasible, computer-based technologies; and (B) to provide job, education, and career counseling, as appropriate during program participation and after job placement.
Labor Market Information (LMI) Services (Youth Only)	Services that provide labor market and employment information about in-demand local industry sectors or occupations, such as career awareness, career counseling, and career exploration services. Career awareness is gaining knowledge of careers, occupations, skill requirements, working conditions, training prerequisites, and job opportunities. Career counseling services include resume preparation information, interview skills, job shadowing opportunities, and long-term benefits of postsecondary education and training. Career exploration helps youth choose educational paths and training or jobs which fit their interests and skills. Career counseling or guidance provides advice and support in career path decisions.

Action Verbs related to the definition of Career Planning or LMI Services:

• **Advised**	• **Collaborated**	• **Discussed**	• **Formed**	• **Provided**
• **Aided**	• **Communicated**	• **Drafted**	• **Gathered**	• **Questioned**
• **Analyzed**	• **Compared**	• **Educated**	• **Guided**	• **Recommended**
• **Arranged**	• **Coordinated**	• **Encouraged**	• **Identified**	• **Reinforced**
• **Assessed**	• **Counseled**	• **Established**	• **Informed**	• **Researched**
• **Assisted**	• **Defined**	• **Evaluated**	• **Interviewed**	• **Reviewed**
• **Assured**	• **Demonstrated**	• **Examined**	• **Motivated**	• **Scheduled**
• **Briefed**	• **Designed**	• **Explained**	• **Organized**	• **Showed**
• **Clarified**	• **Determined**	• **Explored**	• **Outlined**	• **Supported**
• **Coached**	• **Developed**	• **Facilitated**	• **Planned**	

Service-Focused Case Note Quick Reference Guide

1. **Use the Service vs Status Update Checklist:** Use the Service vs Status Update Case Note Checklist to determine if the case note reads as a service or status update. If most answers to the below questions are "Yes" then the case note reads as a service, otherwise the case note reads as a status update.

Question	Service	Status Update
Did the case manager **take action** to support the participant?	☐ **Yes**	☐ **No**
Is the action clearly connected to a reason (**why it was done**) *AND* does the case note document the **outcome of that action**?	☐ **Yes**	☐ **No**
Does the case note include **next steps, follow-up, or a plan** showing continued case management?	☐ **Yes**	☐ **No**

2. **Use Strong Action Verbs for Service Case Notes:** Use action verbs, such as the ones listed below, at the start of the case note to describe the case manager's actions clearly.

Action Verbs related to the definition of CVC or LMI Services:				
• **Advised**	• **Collaborated**	• **Discussed**	• **Formed**	• **Provided**
• **Aided**	• **Communicated**	• **Drafted**	• **Gathered**	• **Questioned**
• **Analyzed**	• **Compared**	• **Educated**	• **Guided**	• **Recommended**
• **Arranged**	• **Coordinated**	• **Encouraged**	• **Identified**	• **Reinforced**
• **Assessed**	• **Counseled**	• **Established**	• **Informed**	• **Researched**
• **Assisted**	• **Defined**	• **Evaluated**	• **Interviewed**	• **Reviewed**
• **Assured**	• **Demonstrated**	• **Examined**	• **Motivated**	• **Scheduled**
• **Briefed**	• **Designed**	• **Explained**	• **Organized**	• **Showed**
• **Clarified**	• **Determined**	• **Explored**	• **Outlined**	• **Supported**
• **Coached**	• **Developed**	• **Facilitated**	• **Planned**	

3. **Ensure Case Note is Service-Focused:** Includes these four elements when writing a service case note:

[I. Action verb] + [II. Purpose] + [III. Outcome] + [IV. Next Steps/Follow-Up]

I. What was done – Use a strong action verb to document the action taken by the case manager.
II. Why it was done – Explain the purpose or rationale of the case manager's action.
III. Outcome – Document the results of the case manger's action.
IV. Next Steps / Follow-Up – Show ongoing support or monitoring by documenting what the next steps or follow-up are for the case manager and/or participant.

4. **Putting it to Practice:** Below is an example of a **service-focused case note**, followed by a breakdown showing how each part aligns with the required elements of a strong service note:

> *"Coached participant on interview techniques to improve job readiness. Participant practiced responses and demonstrated increased confidence. Will follow up next session to observe improvements and provide additional guidance as needed."*

I. What was done – *"Coached participant on interview techniques…"*
II. Why it was done – *"…to improve job readiness."*
III. Outcome – *"Participant practiced responses and demonstrated increased confidence."*
IV. Next Steps / Follow-Up – *"Will follow up next session to observe improvements and provide additional guidance as needed."*