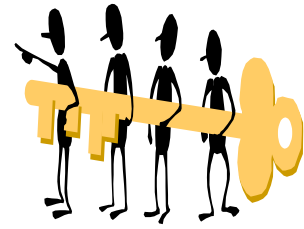


Practice Notes:

Managing Care, Not Cases

Common terminology designates those whom professionals work with as “cases.” Thus, considerations about making certain that clients connect with referral resources often are discussed as “case monitoring” and efforts to coordinate and integrate interventions for a client are designated “case management.”



Given that words profoundly shape the way people think, feel, and act, some professionals are arguing for use of the term “care” in place of “case.” Such a move is in keeping with the view that care is a core value of helping professionals. It also is consistent with the growing emphasis on ensuring that schools are “caring communities.” For these reasons, it seems appropriate to replace the term case management with that of *management of care*.

Management of care involves (1) initial monitoring, (2) ongoing management of an individual's prescribed assistance, and (3) system's management. As with any intervention, these activities must be implemented in ways that are developmentally and motivationally appropriate, as well as culturally sensitive.

Initial Monitoring of Care

Stated simply, monitoring of care is the process by which it is determined whether a client is appropriately involved in prescribed programs and services. Initial monitoring by school staff focuses on whether a student/family has connected with a referral resource. All monitoring of care requires systems that are designed to gather information about follow-through and that the referral resource is indeed turning out to be an appropriate way for to meet client needs. When a client is involved with more than one intervener, management of care becomes a concern. This clearly is always the situation when a student is referred for help over and above that which her/his teacher(s) can provide.

Subsequent monitoring as part of the ongoing management of client care focuses on coordinating interventions, improving quality of care (including revising intervention plans as appropriate), and enhancing cost-efficacy.

Ongoing Management of Care

At the core of the on-going process of care management are the following considerations:

- % Enhanced monitoring of care with a specific focus on the appropriateness of the chosen interventions,
- % Adequacy of client involvement;
- % Appropriateness of intervention planning and implementation, and progress.

Such ongoing monitoring requires systems for:

- % Tracking client involvement in interventions
- % Amassing and analyzing data on intervention planning and implementation
- % Amassing and analyzing progress data
- % Recommending changes

Effective Care Management is based upon:

- % Monitoring processes and outcomes using information systems that enable those involved with clients to regularly gather, store, and retrieve data.
- % The ability to produce changes as necessary to improve quality of processes.
- % Assembling a "management team" of interveners and clients, and assigning primary responsibility for management of care to one staff member or to several staff who share the role.
- % Assuming a role that always conveys a sense of caring and a problem-solving orientation, and involves families as empowered partners.
- % Facilitation of self-determination in clients by encouraging participation in decision-making and team reviews (particularly when clients are mandated or forced to enroll in treatment)
- % Meeting as a management teams need to meet whenever analysis of monitoring information suggests a need for program changes or at designated review periods.

A few basic guidelines for primary managers of care are:

- % Write up analyses of monitoring findings and recommendations to share with management team;
- % Immediately after a team meeting, write up and circulate changes proposed by management team and emphasize who has agreed to do which tasks by when;
- % Set-up a "tickler" system (e.g., a notation on a calendar) to remind you when to check on whether tasks have been accomplished;
- % Follow-up with team members who have not accomplished agreed upon tasks to see what assistance they need.

Systems of Care

The concept of a "system of care" is an evolving idea that is applied in a variety of ways. While management of care is focused on a given client, the concept of systems of care emphasizes the importance of coordinating, integrating, and enhancing systems and resources to ensure that appropriate programs are available, accessible, and adaptable to the needs of the many clients who need help. Moreover, the aim is to ensure these resources are used effectively and efficiently.

A focus on system resources requires attending to various arenas and levels of potential support. A school has many programs and services that it owns and operates. A school district has additional resources. The surrounding community usually has public and private sector programs and a variety of other resources that may be of assistance. City, county, and state agencies also play a role in addressing certain needs.

In its initial application, the concept of systems of care focused on services to address clients with severe and well-established problems (e.g., youngsters with serious emotional disturbance). The intent of systems of care for such populations is to:

- % develop and provide a full array of community-based programs (including residential and non-residential alternatives to traditional inpatient and outpatient programs) to enhance what is available and reduce overreliance on out-of-home placements and overly restrictive treatment environments;
- % increase interagency collaboration in planning, developing, and carrying out programs to enhance efficacy and reduce costly redundancy;
- % establish ways that interventions can be effectively adapted to the individuals served.

To expand these goals to encompass prevention, there are increasing calls for incorporating primary and secondary prevention programs into all systems of care. At school sites, one mechanism for focusing on enhancing systems of care is a Resource Coordinating Team. Such a team is designed to bring together representatives from all major programs and services addressing barriers to learning and promoting healthy development (e.g., pupils services personnel, a site administrator, special education staff, bilingual coordinators, health educators, noncredentialed staff, parents, older students). It also includes representatives from community agencies that are significantly involved at a school.

A Resource Coordinating Team differs from teams created to review individual students (such as a student study team) because it focuses on managing and enhancing *systems* to coordinate, integrate, and strengthen interventions. At the same time, many of the same staff usually are on both types of teams. Thus, initial creation of a Resource Coordinating Team often is best accomplished by broadening the scope of a student study team (or a teacher assistance team or a school crisis team). In doing so, however, it is essential to separate the agenda and have the members change "hats."

A Resource Coordinating Team works toward weaving together all school and community programs and services. Among its activities, the team:

- % Conducts resource mapping and analysis with a view to improving resource use and coordination
- % Ensures that effective systems are in place for triage, referral, management of care, and quality improvement
- % Establishes appropriate procedures for effective program management and for communication among school staff and with the home
- % Suggests ways to reallocate and enhance resources (e.g., clarifying how to better use staff and resources, which activities need revision or are not worth continuing).

Properly constituted, trained, and supported, a Resource Coordinating Team can complement the work of the school's governance body through providing on-site overview, leadership, and advocacy for activities aimed at addressing barriers to learning and enhancing healthy development. To these ends, at least one team member should be designated as a liaison between the team and the school's governing and planning bodies to ensure the maintenance, improvement, and increased integration of essential programs and services with the total school program.

Because they often deal with the same families (e.g., families with children at each level of schooling) and link with the same community resources, complexes of schools (a high school and its feeder middle and elementary schools) should work collaboratively. A Complex Resource Coordinating *Council* brings together representatives from each school's Resource Coordinating Team to facilitate coordination and equity among schools in using school and community resources.