



**So You Want To Be
A Case Manager?
A Career Practitioner's Toolkit**

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Of course, we can't forget our families – always behind the scenes offering support and patiently waiting for us to find time to play.

Historically, career development, social justice, and advocacy have been intrinsically intertwined. The founder of vocational psychology, Frank Parsons, advocated for the poor and disadvantaged; worked against discrimination and oppression; and believed in justice and social change.

~Angela Londono-McConnell

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INTRODUCTION

Case management is neither a new concept nor unique to career and employment services. Social workers, probation officers, vocational rehabilitation consultants, drug and alcohol counsellors, mental health practitioners, and many others in helping professions work within a case management framework. The common thread is that the professional manages a “caseload” of clients and usually provides individualized services. Even when focussing on career and employment services, there are vast differences in how the term “case management” is used and understood. The differences may be due to work setting (e.g., community-based agency, post-secondary institution, private insurer), funding model, region, or a combination of these and other factors.

A plethora of literature exists on case management, including texts, magazines, peer-reviewed journals as well as national standards/frameworks. However, none of these are designed specifically for career and employment services. Developed from two previous publications, NETWERCC’s Journal #15 (1998) and ENET’s Journal #2 (2007), the aim of this guide is to be a resource for case managers within the broad career and employment services sector.

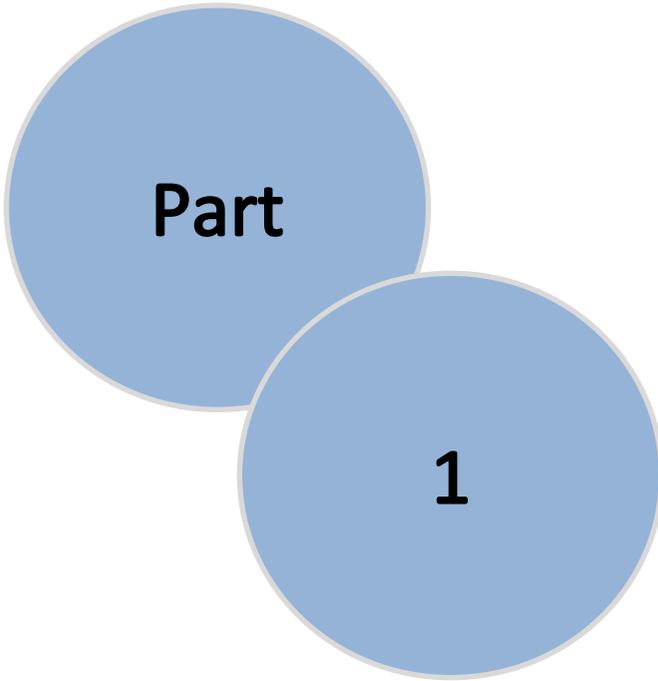
In Part 1, case management is presented as a distinct profession with a defined role. Case management models and frameworks, along with national standards and competencies potentially relevant within the career development sector, are also introduced.

In Part 2, the focus is on the fundamental competencies case managers will need, across settings. The question, “Who do case managers have to be?” is answered by exploring such factors as mandates, working alliance, advocacy, cultural/diversity competence, case notes, community connections, coordinating interventions, and managing time and prioritizing tasks.

In Part 3, the process of case management is considered – answering the question, “What do case managers do?” – including needs assessment, case conceptualization, making decisions, collaborative action planning, exploring opportunities, making referrals, measuring and evaluating progress/making adjustments, and transition and closing the case.

Part 4 focusses on today’s realities and some of the concerns and challenges encountered by case managers and their supervisors/managers. Critical thinking and reflective practice, clinical/practice supervision, leadership development, collaboration and community capacity building, and career engagement are explored.

The Appendix shares various reproducible forms, worksheets, and resources that may help case managers in their work.



The Profession of Case Management

*Nobody can guarantee lifetime employment,
but updating skills can guarantee lifetime employability.*

~Robert E. Allen, Former Chairman & CEO of AT&T

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The concept of *case management* can be traced back to the early 1900s. At the time, although the specific job title of Case Manager likely didn't exist, many nurses and social workers were tasked with case management responsibilities (i.e., assessment, action planning, coordination of services, and follow-up). In the '60s and '70s, a large expansion of social services for various groups (e.g., people with disabilities or who are developmentally delayed; seniors), combined with the deinstitutionalization movement, often resulted in fragmented service or individuals receiving no service at all. Lack of coordination also meant service duplication, resulting in ineffective use of community resources. This is the time when case management, as it is known today, emerged. However, the primary focus then, and today, was on health/medical interventions.^{1,2}

Within career and employment services, case management was first formally introduced by Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) in the late 1990s, though many in the field were already providing case management services. HRDC created a structured employment counselling framework called Assessment Component of Employment Counselling (ACEC); within that they defined case management as “a systematic follow-up process for clients selected for staff-assisted services in order to ensure that they are successful in completing their return-to-work action plans and finding employment.”³ Key duties for case managers included ensuring all services were adapted to meet client need, helping clients access appropriate employment support measures or benefits, coordinating

activities across service providers, and tracking outcomes and recording employment results.

By 2007, when the ENET Journal was last updated, the delivery of career and employment services had begun to transform. Most provinces and/or territories had negotiated individual labour market development agreements which saw federal services being co-managed. Some services were still offered by government employees; others had been completely out-sourced to community-based organizations. Regardless of who was providing the service, the goal was to provide very similar case management services across regions. Today, although provincial and territorial approaches have significant differences, the original federal influences are still apparent across the country and, due to funding agreements, some case management activities are still reported to the Federal government. Separate from government's involvement in career and employment services, private insurers and vocational rehabilitation organizations were also developing their own approaches to case management. In other sectors (e.g., healthcare), case management had become an area of speciality with its own standards of practice and professional designations.

STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

In 2009, the National Case Management Network of Canada published the *Canadian Standards of Practice for Case Management*⁴ which outlined several guiding principles including supporting client rights, being purposeful, being collaborative, supporting accountability, and striving for cultural competency. They also provided

standards in six areas: (1) Client Identification and Eligibility for Case Management Services, (2) Assessment, (3) Planning, (4) Implementation, (5) Evaluation, and (6) Transition.

Similarly, in 2010, the Case Management Society of America published guidelines and standards for case management within their *Standards of Practice for Case Management*.⁵ These are similar to the Canadian standards, though more comprehensive with several additional guiding principles (e.g., evidence-based practice, pursuit of excellence) and 15, rather than 6, standards.

Within the context of career and employment services, workers rely on the Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners (S&Gs)⁶ although, at this time, case management is not formally listed as a separate area of specialization. Instead, case managers are expected to first be career development practitioners (CDPs), with all of the core competencies noted in the S&Gs. They may also have competencies within several of the areas of specialization. For example, case managers may be assessment specialists or career counsellors, or have expertise in community capacity building. Case managers will use their full skill set to support clients towards independence and self-reliance by collaboratively developing and implementing a realistic return-to-work action plan.

MODELS

In addition to not having a specialized set of competencies for case managers, the career and employment services sector does not have a case management model that has been universally adopted. Instead, funders often provide some general guidelines from which agencies will develop their own approach to case management. Other sectors, however, have developed specific case management models, many of which are now supported by research literature. Within these models are some common themes that could be useful for those in career and employment services; themes include strengths-based, community engagement, and brokerage of services.

Strengths Based

A *strengths-based* model focuses on the client's strengths and talents, not his/her weaknesses or barriers. The case manager is expected to treat the client with unconditional positive regard and allow the client to drive the plan. Within these models, there is a large emphasis on encouraging the client to develop and build on informal networks. Success, within this model, is highly dependent on active and ongoing follow-up.

Community Engagement

Community engagement models are concerned with ensuring the community is ready and able to provide the supports needed by clients. In these models, case managers play a crucial role in engaging with the community to assess readiness, develop interventions, and provide support to both clients and members of the community.

Brokerage

Brokerage models consider the case manager as a broker of the services and supports clients may need. In some cases, the models consider case managers as simple brokers (i.e., they do not provide services themselves). In other models, however, case management itself may be considered an intervention. This is often dependent on the level of need.

Systems Driven vs. Consumer Driven

Plionis (2007)⁷ grouped case management models into two key categories – systems-driven models and consumer-driven models. Within many funded programs, case managers may be working within a systems-driven model where the focus is on maintaining the integrity of the agency and where programs have set eligibility requirements clients must meet. Further, expectations of funders may be prioritized over the needs of clients. This can seem in stark opposition to the consumer-driven model that is geared towards clients being empowered to choose the services they believe will best meet their needs. It can be frustrating for case managers whose work and funding is structured upon one model (e.g., systems driven) yet who have a philosophy towards the other (e.g., consumer driven).

Case Example: A Customized Model

As previously mentioned, some organizations have developed their own case management model, investing in both its development and in training all case managers in how to work within the model. Training Innovations Inc. (Tii)⁸ has given permission for their model to be included in this toolkit as an example of a case management model currently being utilized within career and employment services.⁹



The circle surrounding the four dimensions indicates that each dimension is impacted by the clients' personal characteristics and life context (e.g., self-efficacy, coping skills, social and financial resources). In assessing each dimension, case managers are encouraged to consider personal and contextual assets and barriers to employment. In learning to work with the model, case managers are provided with success indicators, possible presenting issues, and a series of questions/prompts related to each of the four components. An assessment summary, for case managers to anchor their notes within, has also been developed.

SCOPE OF THE ROLE

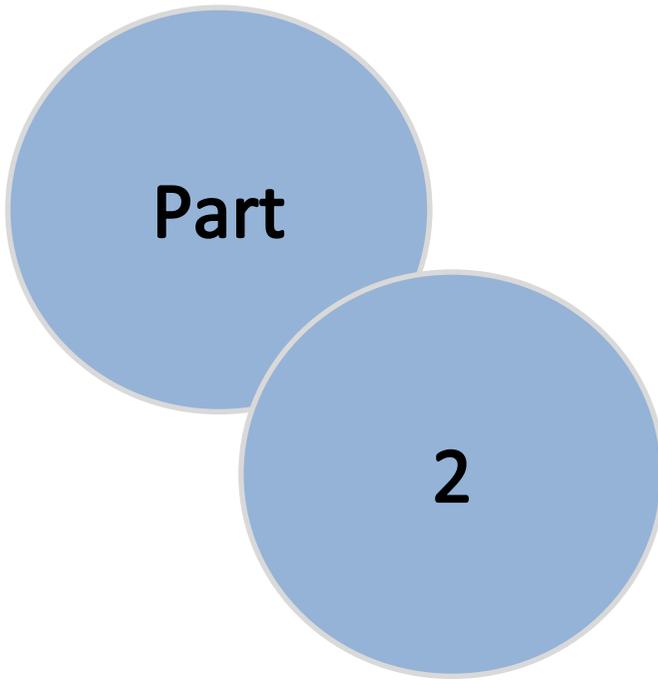
Key informants interviewed as part of this project emphasized that case managers need to remember that they are, first and foremost, career development practitioners. This was especially important because the administrative accountabilities of case management can, at times, feel burdensome to career development practitioners. However, in many settings case-managed clients have the highest level of need which requires the case manager to utilize all of the core competencies of CDPs. In these instances, underpinning all case management is the primary goal of guiding and supporting clients through their career challenges and concerns. The National Case Management Network of Canada (2009) described the role of case manager as “dynamic because it is both proactive in assessing and planning and responsive to the changing abilities and needs of the client.”¹⁰

Some case managers are responsible only for coordination of services and supports. Here a case manager’s primary responsibilities are to gather information, support decision making, monitor progress toward the action plan, and then follow up after the intervention is complete to track success. Other case managers may have a more active role providing one-on-one support (i.e., more than just coordinating interventions). In both instances, case managers may coordinate both in-house and external services and supports.

Sometimes case managers are involved from the earliest contact or client intervention. They’ll see walk-in or referred clients and conduct an initial “needs

determination” assessment (i.e., a brief interview meant to assess barriers, determine eligibility for service, describe appropriate options, and help the client choose an option and develop an appropriate action plan). In other instances, the case manager does not conduct the initial needs determination interview or group session but, instead, only meets with those clients who need a more comprehensive assessment or who meet the guidelines for case-managed services. In some organizations, case managers may need to go beyond direct support to clients to actively marketing agency services to prospective employers and developing promotional materials. There are differences in scope of practice between urban and rural centres, as well; in rural centres, the case manager may be more actively involved in meeting the client’s identified needs compared to an urban centre where the case manager’s role may focus more on assessment and referral. The underlying policy framework, of course, will also guide which services are offered and how.

In any case, at its simplest, case managers will assess clients’ needs, help them articulate a vision or goal, and support clients as they develop a return-to-work action plan. Appendix A shares an Assets and Barriers Checklist and sample goal-setting and action-planning worksheets which may be useful. The following section provides details on the specific competencies that case managers need.



Case Management Competencies

*Success requires collaborative and proactive relationships
to facilitate the client's goals.*

*Whenever necessary, Case Managers refer
clients to other practitioners who have
skills and knowledge to best meet the client's needs.*

~ NCMN, 2009

Regardless of the setting, there are skills, knowledge, and competencies considered fundamental to case management. These include understanding mandates, building a working alliance, advocacy, cultural/diversity competence, case notes, community connections, coordinating interventions, and managing time and prioritizing tasks. Each of these will be briefly examined in the following sections.

UNDERSTANDING MANDATES

Mandates (i.e., the authority to carry out a policy or to provide a service) are typically established by the funder and/or service delivery model. They form the foundation for career and employment services and guide the work of case managers.

However, beyond the overall mandate are specific policies that need to be interpreted when providing services to clients. Understanding mandates and specific policies help case managers identify client eligibility (i.e., Does the client meet specific funding requirements?) and suitability (i.e., Does the intended intervention/service effectively support the client's employment goal?), recognizing that just because a client is *eligible* for services doesn't mean he/she is *suitable* for those services. Understanding mandate and policy helps to ensure that case managers fully understand the broad range of services they can offer and that their interventions can be adequately supported. Case Managers need to have the skills/ability to understand how to interpret policy and create a rationale to defend their decisions.

Many case managers work within agencies/organizations in receipt of some type of funding, often through provincial, territorial, or federal governments. As funders' priorities change so, too, may the mandate of the organization or program. Case managers, therefore, need to be resilient, responsive, and alert to changes in mandates and policies that will impact the services they can offer to clients. Case managers, perhaps more than other career development practitioners, work within complex, dynamic, interconnected systems; changes, therefore, will be constant. Competencies for effectively navigating change and transition are essential in any case manager's toolkit!

Case managers also need the competency and confidence to recognize when the system isn't actually working as intended (e.g., they may identify a policy that, in practical terms, doesn't make sense). In such situations, case managers may need to advocate for an overall change or an exception to meet a specific client's unique needs. Such advocacy would likely begin at the work team level, discussing options within the agency's control. In some cases, project leaders/managers may advocate for exceptions to policy or for larger, systemic changes.

Take a moment to reflect on the mandates governing *your* work, considering, the policies that determine eligibility for case-managed services and how client suitability for potential interventions is determined.

If you are unsure of any of the above, identify with whom in your organization you need to connect.

BUILDING A WORKING ALLIANCE

The first step in working effectively in any helping profession is to form a strong working alliance or partnership with the client. This alliance is developed by building rapport but goes beyond that to instilling trust, demonstrating respect, understanding the client's current motivation for change, and fostering hope. Simple strategies for this stage include:

- Focusing on the client and listening carefully to the issue as it's presented
- Using open questions, reflections (i.e., sounds like...), and clarifications
- Introducing the organization and explaining the services that are available

Case managers are not expected to be counsellors, but they do need basic "helping" skills so that they can establish and maintain a supportive working relationship with clients. Later in the process, they will also need skills to develop an action plan that the client will commit to and to adjust the plan as required.

In research conducted for this guide, key informants reported that, in many cases, insufficient time was allocated to the purpose of establishing client relationships. However, it could also be that case managers need support in developing the skills required to efficiently and effectively build a working alliance.

Key informants also noted that although case managers need to foster good relationships with clients, and establish a mattering climate, they must avoid "cheerleading

counselling” (i.e., only focusing on the positive, avoiding any difficult conversations). Case managers are encouraged to engage in reflective practice (e.g., what is working, and what isn’t, in their relationships with clients?), participate in case conferences, and access “clinical” or “practice” supervision. As noted earlier, case managers are expected to be fully competent career development practitioners and able to work with the whole person, in the context of his/her life circumstances, employment goals, and labour market realities.

When building a working alliance, case managers need to discuss confidentiality and explain the limits to confidentiality that exist within the helping relationship. Early in the process, clients will typically be asked to sign a release of information and also be asked their preferences for communication between sessions (e.g., Can a voice mail message be left? At what number? How would you like me to acknowledge you if we meet in a public place?).

In some cases, sharing information is a condition of receiving services (e.g., without permission to release information to the funder, the client may be ineligible for case-managed services). Some agencies build into the permission process an agreement to case conference with other team members within the agency and to seek supervision, as necessary. However, if information about a client is requested by someone from outside of the program that s/he is participating in (e.g., another agency, doctor, counsellor, or college instructor), to support the assessment process and/or interventions, a separate release of information form would typically be required.

Statements regarding informed consent may be part of an overall intake and release of information form but, here, the focus is generally on outlining the roles and responsibilities of each party (i.e., service provider, case manager, client), the services to be provided as well as their risks and benefits, and service logistics (e.g., making appointments, referral to other interventions, case consultation). In essence, clients are fully informed of the services the agency can provide and then agree to the terms of those services. Combined with a release of information, informed consent will also give an opportunity for the client to identify who may have access to his/her information beyond what may be typical.

Clients will also need to understand who has access to their files, and be advised that they have the right to see their own files. Provincial, territorial, and federal privacy laws¹¹ will impact what information can be stored as well as what information can be made available to others, under what circumstances. Ideally, service providers will understand how these laws impact client confidentiality and access to information and have built forms with these laws in mind. Case managers, however, also have a responsibility to ensure they have an understanding of the privacy laws within their jurisdictions so they can inform clients.

ADVOCACY

Advocacy is defined as “the act of pleading for, supporting, or recommending.”¹² A slightly different definition is “the act of pleading or arguing in favor of something, such as a cause, idea, or policy.”¹³ The case manager’s role as an advocate can be complex and largely dependent on the

setting and funder. Some literature¹⁴ indicates that advocating on behalf of clients is well within the scope of the role; others emphasize that advocacy is actually an ethical responsibility. The National Case Management Network of Canada (2012)¹⁵ noted that *advocate* is a component of the case manager role.

However, some key informants consulted for this toolkit noted that advocacy was not well received by government (i.e., the funder); the belief was that advocacy created more conflict and that a well-reasoned, and well-written, rationale was more appropriate when requesting support for a client. Further, it was noted that *advocates* (i.e., a specific professional role, typically associated with working with members of vulnerable populations) are available in some communities and that, rather than acting as advocates themselves, case managers should refer to more appropriate services.

Generally, advocacy was considered most appropriate when a case manager is advocating for on-the-job supports and employment rights. In these instances, the “target” of advocacy initiatives is the employer, not the funder.

In some cases, the advocacy role of a case manager is complicated by the typical work setting (i.e., a community-based government-funded program) and the reality of serving dual clients, where one “client” is the specific person receiving the service and the other is the funder. When advocating for one potentially harms the other, conflict can occur. Much has been written on the topic of ethical advocacy; the *10 Tips for Ethical Advocacy* resource¹⁶ provides a quick summary.

CULTURAL/DIVERSITY COMPETENCE

Case managers all need to be culturally competent. The Canadian Standards of Practice for Case Management (2009)¹⁷ stated

Cultural awareness is the demeanor through which the Case Manager displays respect, appreciation, and sensitivity to the values, beliefs, lifeways, practices, and problem-solving strategies for a client’s culture and heritage. To provide culturally competent service, a Case Manager remains aware to replace one’s own biases by collecting relevant cultural data, seeking knowledge about cultural distinctions, and partnering with others who are fluent in diverse cultures (as appropriate).

The Canadian S&Gs¹⁸ were revised in 2012 to enhance competencies related to the delivery of high quality service to diverse groups. Section C2.1, Respect Diversity, includes two broad competencies: “Demonstrate awareness and knowledge about diversity” and “demonstrate respect for diversity with all clients.” Such diversity goes beyond the limited definition of culture implied in the case management standards previously quoted, to include age, sexual orientation, ability, education, socio-economic status, geographic location, and any other types of differences that may impact employment choices and success.

Case managers may benefit from using a culture-infused approach in their work with diverse populations. At its roots, the Culture-Infused Career Counselling (CICC)

model¹⁹ encourages practitioners and counsellors to consider how their own cultures impact and influence their work with clients, while also remaining cognizant of the diversity of their clients. This model has six guiding principles including that culture is relevant for all clients and counsellors, that the meaning of career is influenced by culture, and that many traditional theories and models may not be culturally relevant.

According to key informants for this guide, case managers throughout the sector still need to build competencies related to diversity and inclusion and become more comfortable working with diverse caseloads. Further, case managers also need to recognize how to adjust their style/approach when dealing with different groups (e.g., level of formality, dress).

The need to enhance cultural competence was also reflected in a 2013 study²⁰ of the sector; in part the study found that “many CDPs seem overwhelmed by the diversity of clients they need to serve . . . this was of specific concern to focus group participants from Community Living (CLBC) who felt some CDPs did not understand the customized support clients may require.” The same concern has surfaced in serving clients with physical disabilities, mental health challenges, addictions, criminal records, and many other potential barriers to employment.

Although many case managers and career practitioners are aware of the importance of being competent to serve diverse clients, they lack the specific training or supervised experience to offer the specialized supports that some of their clients need. The resource, *10 Tips to Work Effectively*

with Diverse Clients/Customers may be a helpful starting place.²¹

CASE NOTES

In addition to completing specific forms when conducting a needs assessment, case managers also need to create case notes. These may be recorded in many ways including scrawling notes on scrap paper, completing a paper form, inputting information into a spreadsheet, uploading information to an online database, or writing comprehensive reports. However, this type of data is only useful if it can be easily stored, modified, extracted, and understood. As a result, case managers need to develop good note-taking and writing skills; two resources, *10 Tips for Writing Professional Documents*²² and *10 Tips for Editing Professional Documents*²³ share some initial strategies.

Ideally, individual agencies/organizations will have standards in terms of case note expectations; these may include identifying what needs to be documented (i.e., level of detail), how things are to be phrased (e.g., use of 1st person or 3rd person; recording subjective impressions or objective statements/observations), and how often notes are to be updated (e.g., after each contact). Ethical standards related to case notes must also be considered (e.g., how to handle client disclosures or limits to confidentiality).

Case notes will often include documentation that supports a request for services or the need to advocate on behalf of a client. If notes are not comprehensive, the rationale for such interventions may be weakened.

Case notes are also important for continuity of service if a case manager is absent and a colleague or manager needs to step in; good case notes facilitate a seamless transition. Case notes may also be reviewed during a program evaluation or audit; it is important that they clearly describe services provided, document how they fit with the collaborative action plan (i.e., a rationale for those services), and identify client outcomes and/or next steps. In rare situations, case notes may also be subpoenaed as evidence in a court case – case managers, therefore, can not 100% guarantee that their notes will remain confidential.

At times, case managers may need to critically discern what should be officially recorded in case notes. For example, a client may disclose a trauma suffered in childhood, a past issue with substance abuse, or any other comments that may, or may not, be related to the work being done. If disclosed information is not pertinent to the client's current career/employment situation, it may be inappropriate and unhelpful to include it in the client's file. However, information that is relevant to the client's employment goals must be included to form a clear picture and offer a rationale for recommended interventions. When in doubt, case managers must understand their mandate and any policies regarding documentation; consulting with managers/supervisors will generally lead to clarity about what should be documented in client files.

Regardless of the format of case notes, and different standards and preferences across programs, case managers' notes need to be clear, concise, comprehensive (i.e., complete), and correct (i.e., accurate). Two brief

articles, *Case Note Writing Tips for Career Development Facilitators*²⁴ and *Effective Case Notes*²⁵ offer additional tips; however, it is essential that case managers follow the standards and requirements specific to their work setting.

A portion of the work done by case managers is certainly administrative in nature; as a result, case managers, and other CDPs, need to have strong computer skills. In many cases, the bulk of the administrative work is in setting up the initial file during the first visit. Case notes are typically entered into a specific client/case management system that walks case managers through a linear process (e.g., assess need, set goals, develop action plan, establish follow-up) that can feel restrictive. These administrative pieces, however, serve an important function, helping to create a process for summarizing needs, documenting plans, and reviewing outcomes all of which are important for client service and for evidencing the value of work to funders.

However, it remains crucial that case managers remember that administrative functions are *not* the focus of their work with clients. Developing a strong working alliance, helping clients set goals and take action, identifying community supports, and being a resource when needed are the foundations of effective case management work; technology is simply a tool to facilitate that.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

As noted previously, a result of the needs assessment process may be to refer the client to another agency / organization or professional with the necessary skills, knowledge, and/or resources to support the client in

achieving his or her goals. To ensure appropriate referrals, case managers need to recognize how their work connects within the larger community and how clients access supports. In some cases, a referral may be made to low cost counselling or other unpaid supports as a supplement to case management services; in other cases, however, a formal referral to a service paid by the contract (e.g., specialized assessment) will be necessary. These latter scenarios would need to be supported by a strong rationale.

In larger communities, or with more unusual or complex cases, it may be difficult to stay current with the local labour market, available training possibilities, and specialized services and supports. Case managers, therefore, need to have boundless curiosity, strong community connections, and exceptional networking skills.²⁶ They also need to be skilled at establishing collaborative, rather than competitive, relationships.

Although going out into the community is an important component of networking, case managers can leverage technology, especially social media, to strengthen their community ties. Actively engaging in social media (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter) can provide a more viable alternative than time-consuming site visits or networking events for staying current, visible, and professionally connected. Becoming comfortable with social media is also essential in terms of being able to coach clients on the importance of establishing and maintaining an effective professional online presence.

As mentioned previously, the National Case Management Network of Canada (2012)²⁷ identified two key components

of the case manager role – navigator and advocate. In the navigator role, case managers focus on helping clients build connections within and across community resources and help navigate any disparities within the systems. As advocates, case managers can be a voice for individual clients, helping them access the services required; in addition, they can advocate for changes to ineffective policies and raise awareness of gaps and/or problems in accessing appropriate services.

Within some regions, case managers work with other agencies and/or professionals in formal collaborative relationships or strategic partnerships. These partnerships move far beyond the typical interdisciplinary support of clients and may include co-locating (i.e., sharing office or workshop space and resources) or seconding employees (i.e., an employee from one organization working onsite for a different organization and reporting to a supervisor that works there). There are many positive exemplars of this within the career development sector but there also regions where such agency partnerships are not working well. Case managers, therefore, may need to identify strategies for effective case management within less than ideal circumstances, ensuring the needs of the clients are prioritized over any logistical challenges.

COORDINATING INTERVENTIONS

This is where case managers refer to other services, both in-house and external, and offer crucial, ongoing support as the client puts his/her plan into action. Remember that, in some models, it is only at this stage that case management begins (i.e., once the action plan has

been fully developed). In such cases, case managers still need to allocate time to “initiating” and, later, strengthening effective working relationships with the client and relevant service providers.

Strategies to help with coordinating interventions include:

- Supporting the client in getting access to employment benefits/services
- Identifying community supports and liaising with other service providers on the client’s behalf
- Offering feedback, encouragement, and support as steps in the plan are accomplished
- Encouraging the client to identify and use natural supports (e.g., family, friends, community groups)
- Providing necessary feedback, encouragement, reality-checking, and prodding
- Monitoring progress
- Adjusting the action plan when necessary
- Closing the action plan when it is complete
- Following-up at negotiated intervals

When coordinating interventions, case managers may experience delays in decisions (e.g., training approval) that can extend for weeks or even months. In these instances, case managers may need to engage in intermediary case management, moving forward any interventions that can be accessed now while waiting for approval to initiate bigger interventions. For example, clients may be able to access quick and relatively inexpensive programming (e.g., First Aid Tickets, WHMIS training, Food Safe, basic computer skills) or complete other relevant activities (e.g., build a career portfolio, research and network with employers, develop interview skills, attend counselling)

while on a waitlist for training or waiting for confirmation of funding.

Case managers may also have a role as advocates when identifying, coordinating, or negotiating interventions. In our recent research, many key informants noted an unacceptable disconnect between available educational opportunities, eligibility for funding, and industry needs. There is a compelling need to connect employers with educational institutions so that programs are graduating employment-ready students that employers are willing to hire.

MANAGING TIME AND PRIORITIZING NEEDS

Case managers often report having insufficient time available for appointments, note-taking and preparation between appointments, networking within the community, engaging in self-reflection, and/or seeking supervision. Effective time management, therefore, becomes a critical competency for case managers to develop.

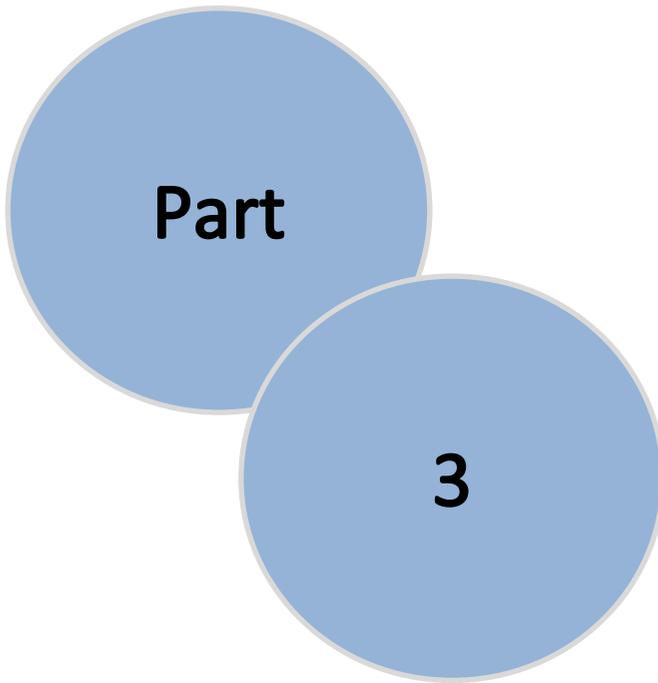
To begin, case managers may need to track their time to help them identify when they are most productive (i.e., their “prime” working time) as well as how they may be wasting time (e.g., disorganization, lack of appropriate email management strategies, cumbersome data management processes). Case managers may also need to schedule chunks of time throughout their day to be more effective (e.g., setting aside time just before lunch and at the end of the day to enter case notes into the computer).

Closely linked to time management is effective prioritization. In assessing almost any client, more than one need will be identified. Case managers, therefore, need to work with clients to prioritize their needs (i.e., identify which need, if addressed, would have the greatest impact on the client's success?).

Such prioritization needs to be grounded in a deep understanding of mandate, policies, and scope. For example, securing appropriate housing may be identified as the top priority for a client but finding housing (or accessing funding for appropriate housing) may fall outside of the case manager's mandate. This can still be identified as a high priority action plan item but the case manager's task may be simply to refer to another service provider, welcoming the client to return for career/employment support once stable housing has been secured. The resource, *10 Tips for Managing Time and Prioritizing Tasks*²⁸ shares additional tips and strategies and provides links to other resources.

In addition to managing their own time and prioritizing their tasks, case managers may also need to juggle multiple clients on various schedules who are waiting for information from external sources such as training providers and funders. As noted in the coordinating interventions section, case managers may task clients with completing a wide range of activities while waiting to action the next steps in their plans. When working with clients, case managers must be able to discern need and then prioritize, and re-prioritize their tasks in order to best serve their full caseload. In some cases, this may mean prioritizing services to clients (i.e., it isn't always about first come, first served but about assessing need and being aware of

various dates [e.g., end of Employment Insurance claim] that could impact a client's opportunity for success).



The Process of Case Management

*Case management serves as a means
for achieving client wellness and autonomy
through advocacy, communication, education,
identification of service resources and service facilitation . . .
Case management services are best offered in a climate that
allows direct communication between
the case manager, the client, and appropriate service personnel,
in order to optimize the outcome for all concerned.*

~ CMSA, 2010

The specific process of case management will differ depending on a wide range of factors including the case management model, work setting, agency, and funder expectations. In general, however, the following components are important considerations in any type of case management process; they include needs assessment, case conceptualization, making decisions, collaborative action planning, exploring opportunities, making referrals, measuring and evaluating progress/making adjustments, and transition and closing the case.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Part of the overall *needs assessment and referral* process, assessing a client's needs is generally the first stage of your work together. Depending on the model, case managers may not do the initial needs assessment; instead, they may only meet with clients after it has been determined that the clients are eligible for case management. Generally, at that point, the case manager would likely conduct a more comprehensive assessment of client needs.

According to the National Case Management network, "Assessment is a dynamic and ongoing collaborative process that actively involves the client and others to secure information in a timely manner and to identify the client's values, goals, functional and cognitive capacity, strengths, abilities, preferences, resources, supports, and needs."²⁹ The resource *10 Tips for an Effective Needs Assessment*³⁰ shares some essential elements to consider, from beginning with the end in mind and understanding eligibility, to being observant and taking a holistic

approach. It is important to go beyond the obvious – to ask probing questions and use clarifying statements to ensure that the client’s needs are fully assessed (e.g., if a client mentions recovering from a car accident, an effective needs assessment would surface the employment-related barriers resulting from that accident, such as daily pain, loss of concentration, or panic attacks). Other components of a needs assessment and referral are shared throughout this guide (e.g., understanding mandate, building a working alliance, conceptualizing the case).

Case managers may use in-house or customized forms for conducting preliminary, as well as comprehensive, needs assessments; such forms are used to document the assessment process and, later, anchor the client’s goals and action plan. It is important, however, that case managers do not overly rely on these forms; instead they should have the skills to know when to move beyond the form in order to ensure an adequate assessment of client need has been completed.

In many funded programs, there can be some pressure to ensure the number of clients served is consistently reaching, or even exceeding, expectations. This can, in turn, result in programs accepting clients who are not employment ready (where “ready for work” is mandatory for the intervention) or who fail, in some other way, to meet minimum requirements (e.g., language level, living within a specific geographical region). When case managers feel pressured to accept clients who don’t adequately fit program mandates, it would be a good time to consult with their supervisors or managers about how to navigate the disconnect.

Assessment Tools

There are formal and informal assessment tools/tests that might form part of the needs assessment process. The use of assessment tools is an area of speciality within the Canadian S&Gs³¹ and not all case managers will have the competency or qualifications to administer some types of formal career/vocational assessment tools. However, the sector does have comprehensive training available in the use of assessment tools/tests; see Appendix C for a selection of training options.

Beyond career/vocational assessment tools, case managers may work with clients who need specialized assessments (e.g., educational, functional, medical, psychological). They should, therefore, be aware of who in the region is able to offer specialized assessment services. Referrals to these types of services should only be done when there is a clear need that can be supported by a strong rationale. Specialized assessments cannot be used as a “holding activity” to keep the client busy while waiting for a funding decision.

When case managers receive detailed assessment reports, they need to be able to integrate that information into their work with clients which may require additional training and/or consultation. The information cannot just be placed in the file without action. Of course, it is also important to understand that some assessment reports are not well-written; in these instances, the problem lies not with the case manager but with the assessment specialist. Case managers, and the agencies that employ them, therefore need to be good consumers of specialized services, understanding how to choose who to work with and evaluate his/her areas of expertise.

CASE CONCEPTUALIZATION

The case manager's theoretical orientation, prior experiences, and personal biases, will all influence his or her perception and understanding of the client's unique situation. This perception/understanding is sometimes referred to as "case conceptualization." Delving deeply into career development theories and personal biases is beyond the scope of this guide; however, a theories refresher can be found in the tip sheet *10 Key Concepts in Career Theory*.³²

It is absolutely essential for case managers to be aware of the impact their theoretical perspectives, and personal biases, may have on their work with clients. da Vinci once said, "He who loves practice without theory is like the sailor who boards ship without a rudder and compass and never knows where he may cast." Theory is the foundation on which work with clients can begin; each theoretical orientation can help case managers view the client's career story through a different lens allowing for an enhanced analysis of need.

For example, considering person-environment fit perspectives can help case managers identify the type of work and/or work environment the client is most suited for. Conversely, using a developmental perspective can help case managers identify what stage of development the client's career may be in, as well as what stage the client believes he or she should be in. Utilizing a systems theory, case managers can help identify the various career

influences (e.g., environmental, economic, social) impacting the client's career.

Perhaps most importantly, case conceptualization, done well, will help case managers sense when to seek consultation with a colleague or supervisor and when to gently push back or question a client. For example, effective case conceptualization can help surface the possibility of mental health issues, supporting the case manager in identifying what work the client can reasonably succeed at now to allow time and space for mental and emotional healing.

MAKING DECISIONS

After opportunities and options have been explored and discussed, case managers will guide clients through a decision-making process. It may be tempting to jump into this stage prematurely, perhaps due to a perceived pressure to develop an action plan. However, successful case managers provide efficient, cost-effective case management support while building in reasonable timelines for the client to gather sufficient information to make informed decisions. Bear in mind that, although the client may decide to pursue any number of options, to be eligible for government-funded services the decision will need to fit within very specific guidelines and be based on factual research, demonstrated likelihood of employment results, and the nebulous concept of “fairness.”

Some decision-making strategies include:

- Using “emergent” decisions (i.e., after research, a “right” choice seems to emerge)
- Normalizing ambiguity and doubt
- Leaving open the option to change
- Making a series of small decisions, rather than one big one
- Introducing formal problem-solving techniques
- Acknowledging that “every decision is a career decision”³³

COLLABORATIVE ACTION PLANNING

Case managers are often tasked with helping clients set short-, mid-, and long-term goals and develop an action plan to facilitate reaching those goals. Perhaps most importantly, case managers need to remember that action planning can be an emergent process. In most instances, clients will be expected to develop an action plan during their first meeting with a case manager. However, this action plan may be revised multiple times as clients explore opportunities and connect with the community; the next sections of this toolkit discuss these components in further detail.

Through their community connections and thorough understanding of available supports, case managers can help link clients to resources they’ll need to achieve their goals and finalize their action plans. Case managers, along with their clients, can also identify various strategic client supports. These may include specific tasks that are anchored in the broad plan (e.g., informational interviewing, researching training institutions) as well as

other activities that will help a client stay on task but may not be specifically outlined in the plan (e.g., scheduling regular walk breaks, getting sufficient rest).

Developing a solid action plan will likely involve stakeholders beyond the case manager and client (e.g., career counsellors/coaches, family members, job developers, funders, educational institutions, and employers). Case managers play a key role in coordinating stakeholder input into action planning that maximize the client's chance of success. This could include bringing interdisciplinary teams together to case conference or facilitating discussions across stakeholders in order to better serve and support clients. Case managers may also need to skillfully manage collaborative processes to prevent and/or manage and resolve conflicts.

Case managers will also need to document activities and communication, as well as supports and concerns raised by stakeholders. This documentation will help case managers negotiate a plan with the final decision maker (e.g., funder).

From a case management perspective, as a plan is being finalized, it needs to be organized into specific, measurable, achievable, time-lined steps. Some strategies include:

- Providing guidance and models for goal-setting and action planning
- Asking for clarification and further explanation if the steps seem vague or unrealistic
- Helping the client visualize how short-term action steps fit with long-term plans
- Working backwards – beginning with long term goals, then specifying what will happen “just before,” then backing up to immediate steps with

specific time lines, back-up plans, and daily “to-do” lists

- Seriously considering financial implications of the plan (i.e., needs/resources)

MAKING REFERRALS

The *Canadian Standards of Practice for Case Management*³⁴ consider case management as a purposeful activity; interventions need to address the specific, and immediate, needs of clients. Sometimes, however, the most relevant interventions may not be offered by the agency a case manager works for; instead, the best option may be offered by another service provider. In a systems-driven model, where funding is often tied to services provided, it can seem counter-intuitive to refer to an external service provider as this can result in reduced fees for their own organization. However, ethical case management requires prioritizing the needs of the client above the needs of the organization. As such, case managers are encouraged to remain aware of the services offered not only by their own agencies but by other organizations throughout the region.

Further, every referral, must be to services deemed **necessary** and **appropriate**. To be necessary, a service should be required (i.e., needed by the client); to be appropriate, a service must take into account the client’s specific circumstances.

EXPLORING OPPORTUNITIES

Only after a strong working alliance has been established, needs have been assessed, and goals have been set, can case managers begin to work on exploring opportunities and options. It can be easy to jump into this stage too soon, especially given the time and resource constraints case managers may be working within. Once a working relationship and clear goals are in place, however, simple strategies for exploration include:

- Discussing appropriate funding or program alternatives that meet the client's needs and eligibility
- Introducing the client to work options that may include short-term contracts, self-employment, multi-tracking (i.e., combining two or more part-time roles)
- Introducing the client to reference materials and community resources
- Introducing research techniques such as informational interviewing and job-shadowing; the Career Research Worksheet, available in the Appendix, may be useful
- Providing forms or tip sheets to guide the client's independent research
- Referring to another service provider for more comprehensive career decision-making support

MEASURING AND EVALUATING PROGRESS / MAKING ADJUSTMENTS

Case managers have a significant responsibility to monitor their clients' progress, determine and report results, modify the action plan as required, and eventually close the client file. To do this effectively requires skills in conducting surveys and phone interviews, efficiently collecting data, and keeping comprehensive records. Case managers will also need to use their assessment and counselling skills at this stage to determine if the client requires further support and/or a renewed action plan. Many case managers struggle with this part of their mandate, wondering:

- How often to attempt to contact the client
- How to efficiently track client progress while maintaining confidentiality
- What to do when clients don't respond to phone messages or can no longer be contacted

Although each of these concerns needs to be addressed and resolved at a local level, some experienced case managers have utilized strategies such as calling at irregular hours (evenings or weekends) or on rainy days, sending letters with prepaid reply cards inside, or supplying the client with dated postcards to return by mail at pre-arranged times. Technology can also assist at this stage, including connecting with clients through email, text messaging, and Facebook messaging. Care must always be taken, however, when using any type of social media. Case managers need to understand the various ethical issues (e.g., "friending" clients, confidentiality) that may be present and ensure adherence to organizational policies.

As follow-up occurs, case managers are expected to monitor and evaluate progress to ensure the action plan still meets the client's needs. If the plan requires adjustment, case managers need to document an alternate plan and a rationale for recommending it. It is important to consider both individual characteristics (e.g., client motivation) and systemic factors (e.g., denied funding, family changes) that may be impacting success.

In performance-based models, measuring and evaluating client progress is a crucial component of effective case management as, within such models, funding may not be released to the agency until the client achieves certain outcomes (e.g., employment).

TRANSITION AND CLOSING THE CASE

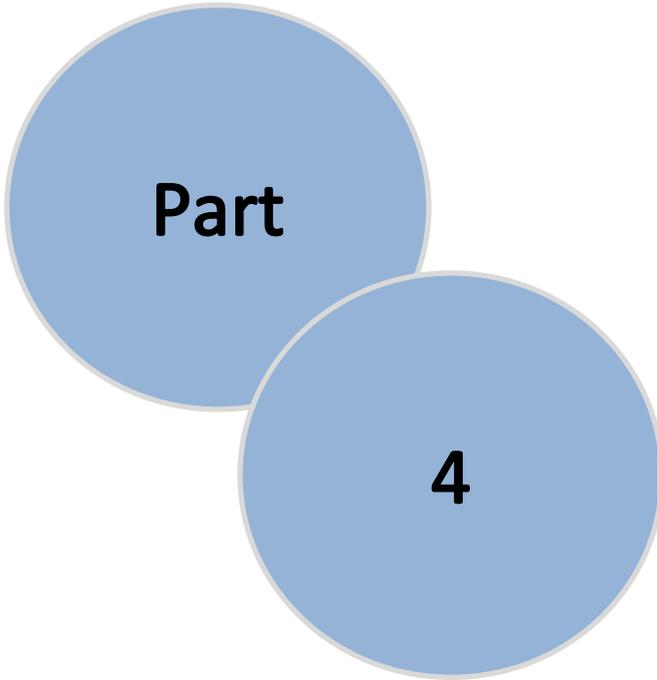
At this stage, case managers, along with clients and key stakeholders, decide whether a client's case file can be closed or if, for some reason, a transition to another case manager and/or service provider is required.

Case managers are encouraged to work within a process that supports eventual disengagement and facilitates client independence and autonomy (i.e., lifelong career management). It is reasonable and respectful to give clients sufficient reminders of when and why their access to services will end and their file will be closed. It is also important to inform clients about how their files can be re-opened if additional services are required. When case files

are closed, notes should be up-to-date, clearly indicating the client's outcome(s) and any recommended next steps.

The Case Management Society of America (2010) noted that cases should be terminated “based upon established case closure guidelines” (p. 14).³⁵ As these could be different for each setting, case managers need to be aware of guidelines for case closure as well as documentation and reporting requirements.

Some clients may need additional time to fully attach to employment; therefore, it is important not to close client files prematurely. However, cases can't be kept open when clients no longer need services. Avoiding case closure can create client dependency and can be an ethical issue (i.e., what work isn't being done or what clients aren't being served when working with clients who no longer need support?). Case closure is often linked to key metrics with funders. Closing a case too soon or leaving it open too long may impact how funders measure the outcome and impact of services.



Today's Realities: Concerns from the Field

*The moment you commit and quit holding back,
all sorts of unforeseen incidences,
meetings, and material assistance will rise up to help you.
The simple act of commitment
is a power magnet for help.*

~Napoleon Mill

Bezanson, O'Reilly, and Magnusson's (2009) *Pan-Canadian Mapping Study of the Career Development Sector*³⁶ identified case management as the number one most time-consuming task for respondents. Similarly, according to Myers, Smith Fowler, Leonard, Conte, and Gyarmati (2011),³⁷ "practitioners report that a growing proportion of clients require more intensive case management and counselling than there is the time and resources to provide." This highlights the importance of case management being recognized as an area of specialization within the broader career development sector, the need for effective case management training, and a commitment from case managers to invest in their own professional development. These, and other concerns from the field, are the focus of this section of the guide.

CRITICAL THINKING AND REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Key informants for this project, many of whom are leaders in the field and directly responsible for the supervision of case managers, noted that there is a need to improve the critical thinking skills of case managers. There are two elements to this – the first relates to boundary of competence and the second to reflective practice.

With increasingly complex cases and diverse client groups, case managers may often be working in situations/scenarios that are unfamiliar or in which they have limited experience. Case managers must be able to critically assess situations, and make quick and effective decisions, without getting bogged down in analysing unnecessary details or policy. This is similar to Gladwell's³⁸

notion of “thin slicing” as described in *Blink* – knowing what information to attend to and making reliable, instinctive decisions relatively quickly. This doesn’t mean avoiding due diligence; rather, it means focusing on relevant data, eliminating options, and zeroing in on salient information to support your work with clients. As previously discussed, sometimes the right decision is to refer a client elsewhere and sometimes it’s to help the client choose a realistic, supportable goal rather than staying stuck in an unproductive cycle that is likely to repeat itself.

Case managers also need to understand how to be reflective practitioners. At its most basic, reflective practice is focused on learning from experience; it is thinking about what was done, analysing the results, and deciding if a different action should be taken next time. Reflective practice, however, should also link to the theories being used and explore beliefs and assumptions that led to the actions that were taken. With increasingly complex and large caseloads, it may be difficult to find time to reflect at the end of a session, or the end of a day; however, it is something that case managers, and their supervisors and managers, need to make time for. It is also a skill that can be developed so case managers move beyond simply focusing on responses to questions that were asked to reflecting on what questions weren’t asked, and why.

Key informants noted that when CDPs are less experienced they tend to be focused on asking specific questions from intake forms or other supporting documents. This, in turn, too often results in case managers missing elements crucial to a client’s case. As part of reflective practice, case managers, and their supervisors, should consider strategies for moving beyond the questions that *need* to be asked,

based on the forms being used, to the types of questions that *should* be asked, based on the client's story. In many ways, this relates to case conceptualization discussed in an earlier section.

CLINICAL / PRACTICE SUPERVISION

Many, or perhaps most, case managers in the career development sector will be career development practitioners; some will hold a relevant provincial designation or certification and others will not. Some case managers, however, are counsellors (e.g., have a Master's degree in counselling psychology and have undergone formal supervision) who have chosen to specialize in career. The notion of ongoing clinical supervision is an important focus for counsellors and, due to graduation and certification requirements, is a familiar concept. However, for other CDPs, as well as their managers and supervisors, clinical or practice supervision is a concept that may need to be introduced.³⁹

Further, effective practice supervision is a skill that many managers and supervisors need to develop; it is not the same as standard performance management or evaluating effective execution of job tasks. Individual and/or group reflective practice, supported by a clinical or practice supervisor will, ideally, increase the skill level of case managers. In turn, this will allow them to more comfortably take on complex cases rather than, as noted by key informants, "opting out."

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Front-line career development practitioners, and case managers, have access to a wide range of professional development opportunities. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for sector leaders (e.g., managers, supervisors, directors). Research conducted in 2013,⁴⁰ exploring the skill requirements for CDPs, identified two main routes to leadership in this sector – coming up through the ranks or parachuting in.

CDPs and case managers who come up through the ranks bring an incredible breadth and depth of experience. They understand the sector, have been exposed to the literature and to various approaches to practice, and may have held many roles throughout their careers. However, they often have limited experience and skill in supervision and management. A mini MBA, or other business-related program, could be an option; however, this may be cost-prohibitive and more training than members of this group need.

Those who parachute in to leadership within the sector bring key supervisory, management, and leadership skills. This group may have specific training in business (e.g. MBA) and/or hold a professional designation relevant to their career (e.g., Certified Human Resource Professional [CHRP]). However, this group lacks industry-specific knowledge that could be vital in effective leadership. Although completing one of the many CDP certificates or specific case management training would give them the industry-specific knowledge, these programs will likely have more content than the supervisor/leader needs and

the practical focus will be on serving clients rather than on equipping leaders with the career development and/or case management knowledge they need to do their work.

Although there have been leadership webinars and workshops to support sector supervisors, managers, and leaders, there remains a gap to be filled in building their competencies.

COLLABORATION AND COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING

Today's case managers, along with their supervisors and managers, must be willing to collaborate and build effective community connections. They must also ensure that their work is structured to facilitate these crucial components.

As mentioned in the Community Connections section, many partnerships exist within this sector. Some are strategic – organizations recognizing a need and coming together to strengthen services. Others are forced – perhaps required by funders little more than *partnerships on paper*.

Effective partnerships can bring synergy that simply wouldn't occur working independently. Ethical client service requires offering clients access to appropriate services rather than competing with other service providers in order to meet targets and/or retain regional contracts.

Project informants mentioned the importance of community capacity building and wondered whether most

case managers actually see themselves as members of the communities in which they work. Community capacity building is an area of specialization within the Canadian S&Gs,⁴¹ and is more than building community connections or taking a collaborative approach. It also includes working with the community to build a vision, assessing the capacity of the community to achieve that vision, analysing the sectors located within the community, conducting a skills gap analysis, and more. This may seem beyond the scope of the case manager role; however, it is through participating in a community capacity building initiative that case managers, as well as sector leaders, can best advocate for the types of services clients need, but cannot currently get locally.

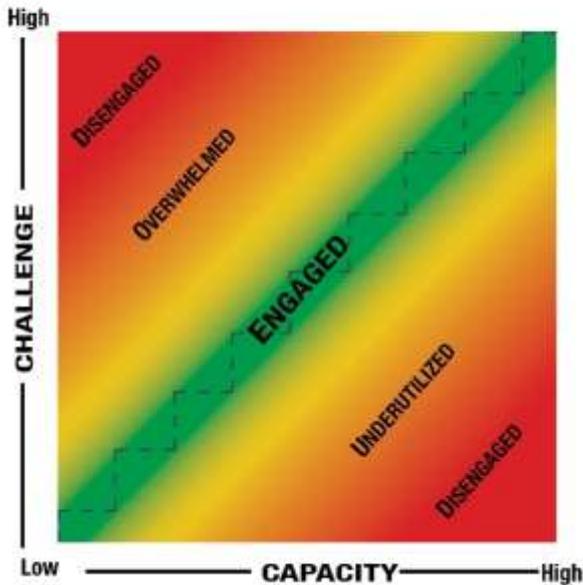
CAREER ENGAGEMENT

Those consulted for this project included case managers, supervisors, managers, leaders, and funders from across Canada. The concerns from the field, outlined above, can also be considered through the lens of career engagement, a model that we co-developed in 2010.^{42,43}

The career engagement model considers the dynamic interaction of challenge and capacity; when in balance, engagement is achieved. However, when challenge, which relates to how difficult as well as stimulating a task is, becomes too great for the available capacity individuals will move out of the zone of engagement towards feeling overwhelmed. Conversely, individuals who have greater capacity (e.g., skills, education, time, access to resources, budgets) than the level of challenge they are facing will move out of the zone of engagement towards feeling

underutilized. Without correction, full disengagement can occur.

Career Engagement



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Case managers are encouraged to consider their level of engagement with their own careers, reflecting on opportunities to be fully engaged along with whether they are more likely to feel overwhelmed or underutilized. Reflective practice and clinical supervision can help to build capacity, thereby equipping case managers to more effectively deal with complex cases and navigate the often challenging systems in which they work.

Engaging in community capacity building and building more effective collaborations can increase the level of challenge

which may be important for case managers who feel their skills aren't being effectively utilized.

Sector leaders may find that the career engagement model serves a dual purpose – first, considering their own engagement as well as how prepared they feel to meet the challenges their work can present. However, the career engagement model can also be used to structure conversations with team members, examining both practice and performance.

CONCLUSION

Case managers do incredibly important work and, in many scenarios, have an enormous responsibility to adequately assess and support clients. With this publication, our goal was to write a practical case management guide customized for those working in career and employment services. Looking ahead, we hope that the role of case manager will become an area of specialization within the Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners.

The following Appendix shares a selection of worksheets that can be reproduced, though please ensure that the source is acknowledged. The Appendix also has links to various Internet resources and to assessment tool/test training.

APPENDIX

ASSET OR BARRIER???

ONLY YOU CAN DECIDE...¹

No matter what career or position you are considering, you will have some strengths that really suit that opportunity...but also some areas that you will need to develop or problems that you will need to overcome. Use this checklist to take inventory of your assets and pinpoint your barriers to success.

Characteristic	Asset	Barrier	Plans to Compensate ²
<i>Certificates & Licenses</i>			
Driver's License			
Bondable			
Education			
<i>Personal Circumstances</i>			
Financial Stability			
Food and Housing			
Medical/Dental			
Childcare			
Transportation			
<i>Personal Health</i>			
General Health			
Mental Health			
Physical Disability			
Addiction			
Prolonged Illness			

¹ Adapted from The Employability Development Plan, Ludden, Maitlen, & Farr, 1985, JIST.

² How? By when? Who'll Help?

Characteristic	Asset	Barrier	Plans to Compensate
<i>Attitudes</i>			
Desire to Work			
Enthusiasm			
Self-Directed			
Realistic Goals			
Realistic \$ Goals			
Business Attitude			
<i>Social Support</i>			
Supportive Family			
Supportive Friends			
<i>Career Management</i>			
Self-Awareness (Interests, Values, Skills, Personality)			
Occupational Info			
Education Info			
Decision Skills			
Long Term Goals			
Job Search Skills			
Resume			

Characteristic	Asset	Barrier	Plans to Compensate
<i>Employability</i>			
Flexible Hours			
Able to Relocate			
Work History			
Appearance			
Verbal Skills			
Adequate Training			
Attendance Record			
Punctuality			
Work under Supervision			
Work Alone			
Team Player			
High Quality Work			
Works Quickly			
Follows Directions			
Willing to Learn			
Willing to Change			
Can Read Manuals			
Business Math			
Writing/Spelling			
Study Skills			

GOAL SETTING TIPS

Effective goals are SMART (i.e., Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Limited)

SPECIFIC

What you are aiming for should be crystal clear (e.g., I want to work full-time, near home, as an automotive technician)

MEASURABLE

Wherever possible, quantify your goal (e.g., I want to work 40 hours per week, within 2 kms of home, earning \$27/hour)

ACHIEVABLE

Goals that are beyond your reach or not realistic in this economy/region are frustrating (e.g., I'm certified and there are 30 employers within my neighbourhood that I can approach; my desired salary is within the average range; this seems do-able)

RELEVANT

Goals that don't mean anything to you won't be motivating or worth working for (e.g., I'm tired of the 40 minute daily commute to my previous job; I've been spending too much money on gas; I really want to walk or ride my bike to work)

TIME-LIMITED

Deadlines help you to continue to take action steps toward achieving your goals. Goals without a time-line are at risk of becoming dreams or "wish list" items.

(e.g., I want to be working in my new job within two months from today; that allows time for networking, arranging interviews, and checking my references)

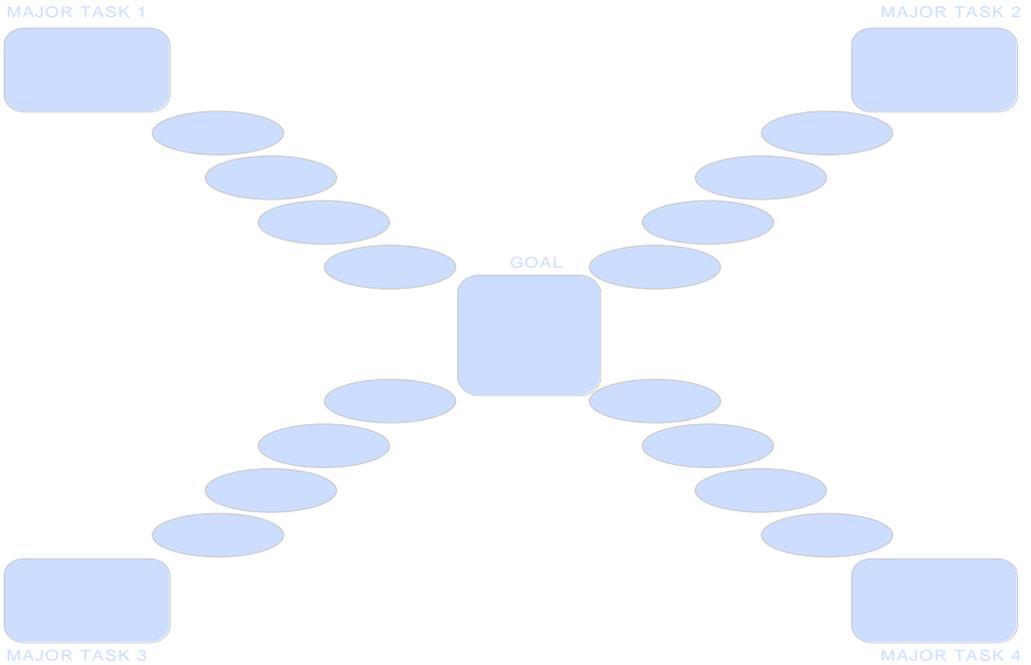
However, it's also important to ensure that your goals remain **flexible**. You need to remain in control of your goals, allowing room for adjustments to changing conditions or priorities.

GUIDELINES FOR SETTING GOALS

- Is my goal SMART?
- Can I break my goal into parts, tackling one objective at a time?
- Have I identified a first step?
- Does my goal fit within my value system? Do I really want it?
- Is my goal destructive for myself or others?
- Can I accomplish my goal with my current strengths and resources?
- Does my goal involve the cooperation of anyone else? How could others help me?

STEP-BY-STEP ACTION PLANNING³

- Start by specifying a SMART goals
- Isolate several major tasks
- Work backwards to identify action steps
- Develop a timeline for accomplishing each step



³ Adapted from: Self-Directed Career Planning Guide. Alberta Career Development and Employment, 1989

GOAL SETTING WORKSHEET

SMART Goals are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Limited.

Is this goal...S [] M [] A [] R [] T []?

MAJOR TASK #1:

STEP	DESCRIPTION	EST. TIME	COMP. DATE	OUTCOME

MAJOR TASK #2:

STEP	DESCRIPTION	EST. TIME	COMP. DATE	OUTCOME

MAJOR TASK #3:

STEP	DESCRIPTION	EST. TIME	COMP. DATE	OUTCOME

For outcome, indicate if complete (✓), cancelled (✗), brought forward (➔), or in progress (●).

ACTION PLAN

Name			
Address			
Telephone			
Age		Gender	
Marital Status		Dependents	
Educational Level			
Personal History e.g., education, work history, interests, barriers to employment			
Vocational Assessment Describe results from those assessments you completed			
Career Goals Be as specific as possible setting goals to achieve during the next two months			
Professional/Personal Development			
Technical/Computer Skills			
Career Exploration			

Job Search	
Business Planning	
Financial Management	
Other Specific Skills/Achievements	
Career Research Include a summary of each career researched, including details about required skills, education, and previous experience; current labour market information; contacts in the industry; follow-up	
Job Shadowing Include industry, business name, contact info, a summary of what you learned while you were there, and recommended follow-up	
Career Action Plan Include immediate, midterm, and long term goals; further education required - where, when, and how much it will cost; and good LMI sources	

RELEASE OF INFORMATION SAMPLE⁴

MEMO

Date:

To:

From:

Re Consent for Release of information

I [insert client name here] _____
authorize the release of the following information (e.g.,
assessment results,
reports): _____

from my file at [insert agency name here] _____

to _____
for the purpose of _____

This consent is valid for 3 months from the date below.

Date: _____
Client Name: _____
Signature _____
Witness _____

**Any questions regarding this release should be directed to
[Case Manager's Name] at [Agency Name, phone number,
email address].**

⁴ Insert Letterhead or Logo

PRIORITIZING GRID^{5,6}

Use this grid to figure out what is most important to you . . .

Step 1—In the boxes provided (the first row of the table below), list up to 10 items that you have a hard time prioritizing in your life (e.g., things you want in a career, things you want at home, classes you want to take).

Step 2—Look at the second row of the table - each cell has two numbers in it (e.g., 1/6). Decide which item, (e.g., 1 or 6) is most important and circle it. Continue doing this in all the other boxes as well.

1	2	3	4	5	6
1/6	2/6	3/6	4/6	5/6	
1/5	2/5	3/5	4/5		
1/4	2/4	3/4			
1/3	2/3				
1/2					

Step 3—After you have finished, count how many times each number was circled and tally them below:

1	2	3	4	5	6
---	---	---	---	---	---

Step 4—Now recopy your list of items, starting with one that was circled the most often, this is your new #1. The item with the next most circles is #2 and so on.

Priority Order:

1	4
2	5
3	6

⁵ Adapted, with permission, from Richard Bolles' classic book; What Color is your Parachute?

⁶ An online version of this tool is available at:

www.successonyourownterms.com/prioritizing-grid

CAREER RESEARCH WORKSHEET

Job Title: _____

Industry/Sector: _____

NOC Code: _____

Sources of Information	
Skills and Competencies	
Education and Credentials	
Sources for Training	
Salary and Benefits	
Physical Considerations ⁷	
Other Requirements	
Labour Market Trends	
Related Occupations	
Next Steps	
Further Contacts and Resources to Explore	
Reflections and Notes	

⁷ e.g., Physical Requirements and Work Environment

INFORMATIONAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The best informational interview questions will be original to you . . . and will have come directly from your career research. They may be questions for which there were no apparent answers in the published sources you accessed or you may want to explore some contradictory information that you uncovered. You may also want career guidance from an “insider” in the field or organization. The list below is provided only to stimulate your thinking. Allow about 15 minutes for most informational interviews—5 to 10 questions will be all that you have time to cover.

JOB/INDUSTRY

- What skills or personal qualities are necessary for success?
- Is there a typical career path in this career?
- What significant changes have you seen over the years?
- Please describe a typical work day/week.
- Does a worker typically have a set schedule or are the hours flexible?
- What’s one thing you would do here if you knew you wouldn’t fail?
- What is the occupational outlook for this field? What trends impact your work?
- What is the salary range? Are there benefit packages? Unions?

RELATED OCCUPATIONS

- What jobs are similar to yours but with different job titles?
- What entry level jobs prepare people for this career?
- What related occupations might fit me now, as I develop the necessary skills for this job?

CAREER DEVELOPMENT/ADVANCEMENT

- What are the opportunities for advancement?
- How long might it take to move to the next step?
- What steps are necessary to “break into” this occupation? For example, could I join a professional association or union, volunteer, or work part-time at first?
- What other areas of this field can people move to from this position?

INTERNET RESOURCES

Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment

[\(http://capla.ca/\)](http://capla.ca/)

National association supporting the recognition of prior learning through resources, conferences/workshops, and special projects (e.g., quality assurance and immigrant messaging)

Canadian Association of Career Educators and Employers

www.cacee.com/

National association supporting post-secondary to career transitions through connecting career educators and employers.

Canadian Council for Career Development

<http://cccda.org/cccda/>

National association seeking to strengthen the professional identity of Canadian career development practitioners, influence policy, and enhance service delivery. Visit the directory of members to find local associations and training providers.

Canadian Standards & Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners

www.career-dev-guidelines.org/career_dev/

National guidelines used throughout Canada to shape training/development programs and certification of career development practitioners. Defines the scope of practice and outline core and specialized competencies.

Canadian Standards of Practice for Case Management

www.ncmn.ca/resources/documents/english%20standards%20for%20web.pdf

National standards defining case management and providing guiding principles for practice. Six standards are outlined with specific guidelines for case manager expectations for effective practice

Federal Labour Standards

www.esdc.gc.ca/en/jobs/workplace/employment_standards/labour/index.page

Information related to the federal labour standards including hours of work, wages, leave, and holidays. Find helpful resources to support compliance (e.g., pay calculator, forms).

Job Bank

<http://www.jobbank.gc.ca/>

Online resource to search for job openings, investigate labour market trends, and explore career options. Based on the national occupational classification system.

Pan-Canadian Mapping Study of the Career Development Sector

www.ccdf.ca/ccdf/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/PAN-CANADIAN-MAPPING-STUDY-OF-THE-CAREER-DEVELOPMENT-SECTOR.pdf

Study investigating the profile of service agencies (e.g., types of agencies, clients served, service focus) and career development practitioners (e.g., gender, years of experience, education, training). Results provided a better picture of the career development community in Canada and researchers identified priority action items for consideration.

Standards of Practice for Case Management

www.cmsa.org/portals/0/pdf/memberonly/StandardsOfPractice.pdf

National standards defining case management, philosophy, practice setting, roles, and process. Fifteen standards are detailed with guidelines on how case managers can demonstrate proficiency.

Tip Sheets (Life Strategies)

<http://lifestrategies.ca/resources/tip-sheets.cfm>

Beyond those mentioned within this guide, there are a wide variety of tip sheets, covering diverse topics, posted on the Life Strategies' website including assessment, engagement, leadership, and much more.

ASSESSMENT TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

There are two ways to obtain training on assessment tools. The first is to focus on specific tools; training is usually offered by the publisher or facilitators designated by the publisher or distributor. The second is to complete an “umbrella” course, generally at the graduate level, that covers foundational assessment concepts and may provide supervised practice with various assessment tools. Such courses are typically embedded within programs (e.g., counselling) at post-secondary institutions or offered through continuing education departments to facilitate ongoing professional development.

We’ve included some options below.

Specific

Emotional Quotient Inventory

- www.mhs.com/eihc.aspx?id=EITraining

Myers Briggs Type Indicator and Strong Interest Inventory

- www.psychometrics.com/getting-certified/

Personality Dimensions

- www.personalitydimensions.com/#!about-the-certification-program/c123c
- <http://lifestrategies.ca/services/courses/personality-dimensions.cfm>

General

Adler

- www.adler.ca/psychology_postgraduate_certificate.jsp

Athabasca University

- www.athabascau.ca/syllabi/psyc/psyc469.php
- www.athabascau.ca/syllabi/gcap/gcap634.php

Douglas College

- www.douglascollege.ca/programs-courses/catalogue/courses/PSYC/PSYC4360

Life Strategies Ltd.

- <http://lifestrategies.ca/services/courses/psychometric-assessments-b-level.cfm>
- <http://lifestrategies.ca/docs/Assessment-Course-Outline.pdf>

Yorkville University

- www.yorkvilleu.ca/programs/graduate-programs/master-of-arts-in-counseling-psychology/course-descriptions/

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Dr. Deirdre Pickerell, CHRP, GCDF-i is Life Strategies' Vice-President and has made significant differences within the field of career development – locally, nationally, and internationally – including leading Team Canada, and being the catalyst speaker on the role of emerging technologies, at the 7th International Symposium on Career Development and Public Policy. In recognition of her work, Deirdre has been honoured to receive the 2014 Stu Conger Award for Leadership in Career Development and Career Counselling and the 2006 Human Resources Association Award of Excellence.

Dr. Roberta Neault, CCC, CCDP, GCDF-i, is President of Life Strategies Ltd., a small consulting firm with international scope. She is a counsellor, educator, keynote speaker, and author of numerous articles and resources on topics related to individual and organizational success. Roberta was recipient of the 2002 Stu Conger Award for Leadership in Career Development and Career Counselling in Canada and the 2010 Professional Development Award from the US-based National Employment Counseling Association. In 2011, she received the Gold Medal and Diamond Pin Award for Leadership in Career Development.

Deirdre and Roberta are known for being passionate advocates for innovative, and cost-effective, ways for career development practitioners to enhance their skills. They've written countless books, developed and taught courses, and facilitated webinars on a wide range of topics important to CDPs.

OTHER BOOKS BY THESE AUTHORS

Beyond the Basics: Real World Skills for Career Practitioners (Neault)

Career Strategies for a Lifetime of Success⁸ (Neault)

- Time to Reflect: Understanding Yourself
- Time to Explore: Understanding the Workplace
- Time to Choose: Identifying Career Possibilities
- Time to Prepare: Developing Portfolios, Resumes, and Interview Skills
- Time for Action: Successful Marketing Strategies
- Time to Look Ahead: Proactive Career Management

Leadership Lessons for Transformational Times (Pickerell & Neault)

Look Before You Leap: Self-Employment Survival Strategies (Neault & Pickerell)

Personality Dimensions Toolkits for Trainers (Neault & Pickerell)

That Elusive Work-Life Balance (Neault)

Where's the Work: Helping Career Practitioners Explore Their Career Options (Pickerell and Neault)

⁸ Available as full print or e-book or 6 individual e-books

END NOTES

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