

Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2018 Implementation

Individualized Case Plans

Overview

An individualized case plan is a document created collaboratively by the supervising staff, youth, and others in the youth's life to address the youth's needs, with the purpose of helping a youth reduce his or her risk to recidivate by making positive changes. So, the youth's risk-and-needs assessment information is used to generate an effective case plan tailored to the youth's circumstances.

Case plans should include goals and action steps that the youth can realistically achieve in a relatively short amount of time and provide for positive incentives in response to positive choices the youth makes, as well as sanctions for negative choices. If a behavior response system is in place, it should be used in conjunction with the case plan while the youth works towards meeting case plan goals.

Tennessee Legislation

37-1-173(a) and (b) - Requires the supervising authority for each delinquent or unruly youth to develop and implement an individualized case plan in consultation with the youth's parents/guardian/legal custodian, the youth's school, and other appropriate parties, which must include the items specified in section 37-1-173(b)(3)

37-1-173(b)(1) - For delinquent offenses, the plan must be informed by the results of the validated risk-and-needs assessment

Case Plan Components

The individualized case plan should be informed by the results of a risk-and-needs assessment (in delinquent cases) and should be created when supervision begins. It should also be updated as progress is made and services are put in place. While the supervisor staff member guides the case planning process and structures the plan around the youth's needs, the youth's and youth's family's involvement ensures that the steps and goals are attainable, including identifying what the youth is motivated to change, and enables the youth to provide input and participate in their own rehabilitative process. Meeting case plan goals requires support from a variety of sources (family, school, program providers, etc.), and communication with these partners is essential.

A case plan should be written like a recipe: all the steps and requirements should be clear and easy for the youth to follow. It should have several key components:

- **Goals:** These are the larger objectives the youth wants to accomplish; goals should be directly related to criminogenic needs.
- **Action steps:** These are the smaller components that lead to completing the goals; action steps should be like rungs in a ladder that end with goal completion.
- **Barriers:** Any barriers that stand in the way of the youth completing the action steps and goals should be identified, and helping the youth determine how to address or overcome those barriers will increase the likelihood of success.

The case plan is a tool for measuring the youth's progress, and supervision meetings should be centered on reviewing the case plan and the progress made towards completing action steps and meeting goals. It is important to celebrate the youth's successes, including through use of a behavior response system, to encourage positive behavior and progress. When there are missteps or negative behaviors, supervision meetings should focus on understanding what happened and why, including whether there are any

barriers the youth needs help overcoming. When appropriate, sanctions may be imposed to discourage the negative behaviors. Throughout the process, supporters in the youth's life should be involved in celebrating successes and eliminating negative behavior so that after supervision is complete, these supporters can continue to encourage the youth's growth and positive behavior.

Rationale

As compared to a "one size fits all" approach to case planning, **effective and timely individualized case planning** will **reduce technical violation and new arrest rates** because, **like a medicine, the services and dosage** provided to a youth **must match the youth's needs to have the desired effect**. In fact, too much intervention in the case of a low-risk youth can actually increase the youth's likelihood of reoffending by creating contact and interaction with high-risk youth.

Individual case plans are the way of ensuring the proper dosage, and they serve as a **practical, achievable plan with goals and steps matched with the youth's risk and needs** that the youth and supporters can follow and work toward.