25. Case Narration

25.1 Purpose of Thorough Narration

Cases frequently transfer between offices or are worked on by different workers in the same office. Good documentation in the case narrative will save the worker time in reviewing the case and assist him/her in better understanding what is occurring.

In the CCS environment, clear documentation in the case narrative is critical so that any worker assisting the client is able to determine the series of events that have occurred without having the client repeat themselves every time he/she calls in. Good narration is critical so that accurate determinations are made.

Additionally, cases are reviewed by Supervisors, Quality Control, Appeals, IEVS, Program Coordinators, and local, state and federal auditors. Understanding “what's going on” and the “how” and “why” a determination was made will help to ensure good service delivery to our clients and is necessary for support staff to do their job.

Also, state and federal regulations mandate that compliance with certain program regulations/requirements be narrated.

Lack of documentation in the case narrative results in inappropriate use of staff time trying to determine case activity. Time is very valuable to all of us. It is critical that staff approach case narration requirements thoughtfully and professionally.

25.2 Maintain Case Comments Window

The CalWIN system automatically enters comments for automated changes and actions. However, it does not document the basis for the eligibility determinations.

The Maintain Case Comments window in CalWIN is an electronic version of the “Contact-Action Summary” (SCD 163). It is meant to be an ongoing summary record of client contact and a summary of worker determinations and reasons for actions.
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Information NOT recorded elsewhere in the case narrative must be documented on the Maintain Case Comments window. Documentation on CalWIN screens does not meet the requirement of being documented elsewhere, since staff cannot be expected to search through CalWIN windows to locate the information.

Instead of documenting in the “County Use Section” on individual forms, the information must be documented in Maintain Case Comments for the ease it provides for anyone reviewing a case file. It also facilitates the case review process since a reviewer will not have to navigate between CalWIN and the Integrated Document Management (IDM) system to locate the information.

25.3 Required Narration

It is required that the following circumstances be narrated in the Maintain Case Comments window:

25.3.1 Information Provided by Clients Verbally (Phone or Office Visit)

It is critical that the following be narrated when clients report the following:

- Address or shelter expense changes
- Changes in household composition
- Changes in income, expenses or property
- Deprivation established
- Requests to terminate benefits
- Any other requests (i.e., help in resolving a problem).

25.3.2 CalWORKs Common Cases

Any documentation on a DFCS/CalWORKs Common Case must be entered under the CalWORKs Common Case Type.

25.3.3 Collateral Contacts

Collateral contacts with the following sources must be narrated:

- Employers
- Landlords
25.3.4 Reason for Actions Taken

Reasons for actions taken on reported changes if unusual or questionable must be narrated so the reviewer has a clear understanding of what occurred and why it occurred.

25.3.5 QR 7/MSR Processing

The following are types of narration associated with the processing of an income report:

- If a change in income is involved or a discrepancy exists with other case information
- Anticipated Income Determinations
- Good Cause Determinations.

25.3.6 Reason for Non-System Determined Issuance

Whenever a Non-System Determined Issuance (NSDI) is made, it is imperative that the reasons for the NSDI be explained. This is particularly important for an audit trail.

25.3.7 State/Federal Mandated Documentation

It is required that the following be documented to satisfy State/Federal requirements:

- Civil Rights Compliance [Refer to Common Place Update #05-01]
- IEVS Abstract Processing.

25.3.8 Personal Contact Requirements for Late or Incomplete QR 7/MSR

All actions taken and contacts made in regards to late or incomplete status reports must be narrated.
25.3.9 Personal Feelings

Narration on the Maintain Case Comments window should NEVER include a staff member’s feelings about or criticism of the client or another staff member. Also, a supervisor’s evaluation of the casework is not appropriate on the Maintain Case Comments window.

Reminder:
The client has the right to review his/her ENTIRE case narrative except for “Privileged/Confidential” documents. The information on the Maintain Case Comments window is NOT considered privileged or confidential.

Note:
The term “illegal alien” shall not be used when documenting a client’s immigration status. If the client is undocumented, the term “undocumented non-citizen” must be used.

25.3.10 Interpreter Services

In order to meet the confidentiality requirements for applicants/recipient when individuals other than agency employees are used as interpreters, an “Authorization to Release Information” (CSF 13 or SCD 1029 and MC 306) must be obtained. The case narrative must be thoroughly documented on the Maintain Case Comments window that a release form was signed and a copy must be scanned into the IDM system under the F2 - CASE VERIF/CHILD SUPPORT tab.

25.4 Documentation Samples

The following are critical areas of documentation and information that must be included when narrating in the Maintain Case Comments window for these particular areas:

25.4.1 Intake / RRR

When narrating the case scenario for intake/RRR, it is imperative the following be documented:

- Household Composition: Who is included/excluded; who is requesting aid, etc.
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• **Citizenship**: If there are non-citizens in the case, specify their residency (e.g., sponsored, battered, undocumented, visitor, etc.).

• **Property**: Real and personal property owned by the client must be documented (car, bank account, home, etc.). The disposition must also be documented (sold, closed, etc.).

• **Income**: What kind of income does the client(s) have. Explain the calculations made.

• **Shelter Cost**: Rent amount, utilities (SUA/LUA/TUA).

• **Miscellaneous**: Document the following was explained in the case narrative: Rights and Responsibilities and client appeared to understand; Provided and explained all documents in the (name of program[s] applied for) intake/RRR packet. All unique circumstances must also be narrated.

Example:
Rights and responsibilities explained to Mrs. Garcia and she appeared to understand. Provided and explained all documents in the CalWORKs/CalFresh intake/RRR packet.

25.4.2 Case Updates

It is critical the following case updates include the following information:

• **Address Changes**: When narrating address changes it is extremely important to document any new rent amount and utilities (especially if SUA/LUA/TUA is allowed/disallowed).

It is also critical that any increase/decrease in benefits as a result of the change be narrated.

• **Newborns**: When narrating a situation regarding a newborn, ensure that the following is also documented: Status of (application for) Birth Certificate, Social Security Number (SSN); Immunization record; Forms required (e.g., “Statement of Facts to Add Child Under Age 16” [CW 8A], “Support Questionnaire [CW 2.1], “Application for MFG Rule” [SCD 1248], etc.)

• **Adding a Person**: It is important to narrate whether or not the person is employed; if the person is a U-Parent and the “CalWORKs U-Parent Beginning Date of Aid” (SCD 1308) is signed by both parents; if the individual has income, and if so, how it is being calculated; narrate the individual’s property and how it affects the case; and any other unique instances.
25.4.3 Processing of Income Reports

The following items must be addressed when narrating that an income report was processed:

• Any changes in income or property reported and how it was calculated. Is the income being used in the next payment quarter?

• Anytime a new job is reported it must be narrated and how the income affects the case (e.g., how is the Income Reporting Threshold (IRT) affected, etc.).

• Anytime the client reports a job has ended. The reason why the job ended must be narrated. Did the client quit? Is a good cause determination necessary? What actions will be taken on the budget? Has the client applied for Unemployment Insurance Benefits (UIB), etc.?

• Any persons that have moved in or out of the home and how the case is affected as a result of this change.

25.4.4 Collateral Contacts

All contacts with the client as well as third collateral contacts must be narrated. The following are a few examples of types of occurrences that must be narrated:

• Scheduling/rescheduling of appointments
• Request for verifications
• Community complaints
• Reports of child abuse/domestic violence, etc.
• Interaction with Social Security

Any action or follow-up action taken as a result of the reporting must also be documented.

25.4.5 Sanctions / Penalties

The following types of sanctions must be narrated:

• CalWORKs Employment Services (CWES)/Vocational Services (VS): Who was sanctioned and when? What is the level of sanction?

• CalFresh: Who and when?
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- **Failure to Cooperate With the District Attorney (DA):** Was it for CalWORKs or Medi-Cal? Who was sanctioned? What is the penalty? How is the case affected?

- **IEVS:** Who and when?

25.4.6 **Time on Aid (TOA)**

Narrate all information related to TOA issues. Include all communication between the Eligibility Worker (EW) and TOA Reviewer.

25.4.7 **Fraud/FRED Referral**

It is important to narrate who is being referred, why the referral is made. All Drug Felon Codes must also be documented.

25.4.8 **Overrides**

- All Bottom Line Overrides (BLOs), Non-System Determined Issuances (NSDIs) and Non-System Determined Claims (NSDC) must be narrated.

  The specific reason for the override must be narrated along with:

  - The amount of benefits issued outside of the normal authorization process,
  - Any claim created in association with the override.

25.5 **Recording Devices**

25.5.1 **Use of Devices**

A client who requests to record an interview/office visit with his/her worker or any other Social Services Agency (SSA) staff is to be granted permission to do so. Our Agency will not furnish the recording device. The client must provide his/her own recording device and be informed that he/she is responsible for the safekeeping of the information within the recording and that the Agency has no legal responsibility for the information recorded. When the interview/office visit involves DEBS/CWES
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case actions, the worker is to document in Case Comments in CalWIn that a recording took place. Staff is to conduct the interview/office visit per existing business process.