



CASE TRANSFERS AND TRANSITIONS

A resource for organizations and agencies providing disaster case management.

Background

Over the course of disaster case management, case transfers may be helpful or necessary. This document expands upon the existing National VOAD guidance of the Disaster Case Management Committee specific to case transfers, included below for convenience, in *italics*.

- *The organization transfers and closes a case when a transfer is requested by the client or when it is determined that transferring a case to another disaster case management organization is in the client's best interest and the individual or family concur.*
- *Reasons for case transfer may include transfer to an organization with specialized services and resources a client needs that can be accessed only by transfer to that organization, for example, the services and skills of bilingual staff, services for seniors, and services for persons with disabilities.*
- *When a resource and time-limited program closes, resulting in termination of services, cases are closed and transferred to an appropriate provider.*
- *An organization transferring and closing a case consults with the receiving organization prior to transfer to insure acceptance of the case and continuity of service.*
- *Case files are transferred to the lead organization wherein the organization is part of a consortium of DCM service providers.*
- *Clients are offered a written summary of services provided by the DCM Organization, and of all relevant resources accessed for the Client's recovery.*
- *The closed case file is then securely transferred and maintained for at least three (3) years from date of program closure according to organizational policy.*
- *It is recommended that organizations have a written policy as to the transfer of case files (both hard files and electronic) and that these files be accessible upon request of the Client.*

Reasons for Case Transfer

The client's rights are primary when determining whether to transfer a client's case and related documentation. In ALL cases, the client must agree to the case transfer in advance of the transfer. A client's case may be transferred for one or more of the following reasons:

1. *Client preference:* Every client should have the opportunity to seek case management services from a provider of choice, where options exist. *NOTE:* The client is not obligated to provide a reason to the originating organization for requesting a transfer to another provider.
2. *Specialized services:* Another provider may offer specialized services or resources that match the client's needs.
3. *Accessibility:* Another provider may be more accessible to the client.
4. *Availability:* The originating case managing organization may close, necessitating case transfer; or another provider may have the capacity to serve the client more promptly.

Transfer Confirmation and Case Continuity

Once the client has agreed to transfer to another case managing organization or agency:

1. The client acknowledges the case transfer request as evidenced by a signed release.
 - The client “owns” his/her/their information. The client’s recorded information is therefore not transferable or assignable without the client’s written consent.
 - A generic organizational release of confidential information, which allows organizations to share information for verification and advocacy, does not typically include a release for case transfer. A specific release for case transfer is recommended for this purpose.
2. The originating case managing organization confirms that the receiving case managing organization will accept the client.
3. Pertinent information is shared with the receiving case managing organization in order to maintain continuity of the client’s recovery plan and progress.
 - Once the client agrees to the case transfer, only copies of client-approved documents in the case file are transferred. Original documents are maintained by the originating case managing organization.

Best practice: Signed documents are typically included in case transfer. Case notes should not be transferred, unless specifically requested by the client. However, a summary narrative may be extremely helpful to both the client and the receiving agency. This summary note should not include medical or mental health diagnoses, or information about persons who are not part of the client’s household.

Mechanisms for Transfer of Case Information

There are several mechanisms for transferring case file information:

1. Exchange information via a secure electronic database.
2. Provide the client with hard copies of their case file; the client can then share information at their discretion.
3. Physically transfer copies of relevant case file documents to the receiving case managing organization.

Maintenance of Case File Information

- In ALL circumstances, client case files are the responsibility of the case management provider. The client’s disaster case manager and ultimately the case managing organization are responsible for the storage and integrity of the client’s personal information and case file—ensuring confidentiality of the records at all times, even after the case is transferred or closed.
- The originating organization maintains all original documents and copies obtained during the course of case management.

Other

- Case managers who transfer from one organization or agency to another do not “take their cases with them”.
- Cases do not “automatically” transfer to another organization or agency due to the availability of government or private funding for case management.
- Neither a referral for a service or resource, nor a case presentation to a committee of a long-term recovery group, constitutes a “case transfer”.

Best practice: Clients who seek alternate case managing providers are encouraged to contact the originating case management organization in order to formalize the request. This minimizes risk for duplication of case management services and resources, and enhances inter-agency cooperation.