



# Youth Case Files: Practical Strategies & Tools for RHY Programs

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Thursday, June 18 | 1:00 - 4:00 pm ET

**RHYTTAC**

Runaway and Homeless Youth Training,  
Technical Assistance, and Capacity Building Center

# Welcome

**NOW**



## **Youth Case Files**

*90 Minute Training*

**2:30 PM ET**



## **Transition**

*15 Minute Break*

**2:45 PM ET**



## **Program-Specific Sessions**

*Join your program track: BCP, SOP, TLP, MGH*

**3:55 PM ET**



## **Closing**

*We'll share the CEU and evaluation form*

# Meet the Presenter

Kendel DeHart, KD Consulting

# Learning Objectives

1. Understand the role of case management and documentation in supporting effective service delivery, program accountability, and continuity of care within RHY programs.
2. Identify the core components of a well-organized youth file, including intake documentation, assessments, service planning, case notes, and exit documentation.
3. Apply best practices for clear, objective, and consistent documentation that supports youth-centered services while meeting program and funding requirements.
4. Recognize common challenges programs face in managing youth files and explore practical strategies to address those challenges.
5. Utilize the Youth Files Toolkit as a resource to strengthen file organization, documentation practices, and staff training within their programs.

# Agenda

- Why Quality in Case Management Matters
- Key Components of Strong Youth Case Files
- Best Practices for Documentation
- Common Challenges
- Youth File Toolkit Overview
- Reflection
- Key Takeaways
- Q&A

# This is a Working Session



This session is designed to be practical and interactive



You will have time to discuss your current file systems



You will work with peers in similar program types



Goal is not perfection — goal is progress and clarity

# RHY Monitoring Expectations



# Why Quality in Youth Case Management Files Matters

- Support effective service delivery
- Ensure program accountability
- Support continuity of care
- Demonstrate services during monitoring
- Tell the story of the youth served

# RHY NOFO Expectations for Youth Files

- **Programs must maintain:**
  - Documentation of youth eligibility
    - Examples: age, housing status, identity, or other eligibility documentation
  - Case notes and service plans
  - Records to demonstrate program services and outcomes
    - Examples: referrals, assessments, service documentation, and follow-up records
    - Documentation must be available for monitoring review
- **Programs must document:**
  - Services provided to all youth with FYSB funding
  - Program entry and exit information

# Program Specific Documentation

- **SOP documentation** focuses on outreach contacts, engagement, and services provided in the field
- **BCP documentation** focuses on intake, eligibility, crisis services, and exit documentation due to short stays
- **TLP and MGH documentation** focuses on service plans, case notes, goal progress, and aftercare planning due to longer stays

**Note:** *While documentation looks different across program types, all programs must document eligibility, services provided, and program participation.*

# RHY Monitoring Tool: What Reviewers Are Looking For



Eligibility  
documentation



Consent and  
required forms



Case notes  
and service  
documentation



Service plans  
and goal  
tracking



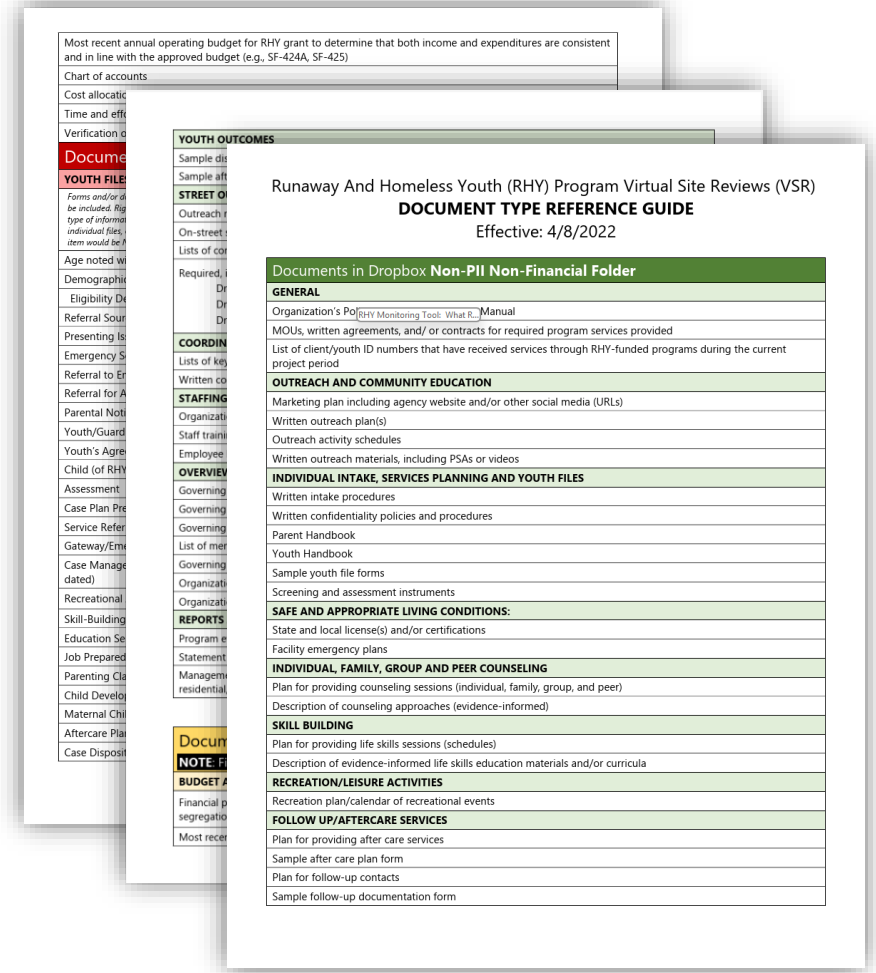
Timeliness and  
consistency



File  
organization  
and  
completeness

# Onsite Monitoring Reference Guide

- FYSB Onsite Monitoring Visits require RHY grantees to gather a number of essential documents and place them in a secure shared folder.
- [This document](#) was created to provide grantees with information on what items were reviewed during the Site Reviews.
- Use this tool as an independent audit to ensure you have all the information reviewers will look for during Site Reviews.



# Common Monitoring Findings

- Missing eligibility documentation
- Incomplete intake forms
- Case notes too vague or too infrequent
- Service plans not updated
- Missing signatures/dates
- Files difficult to navigate
- Documentation not aligned with the services reported



# Reflection

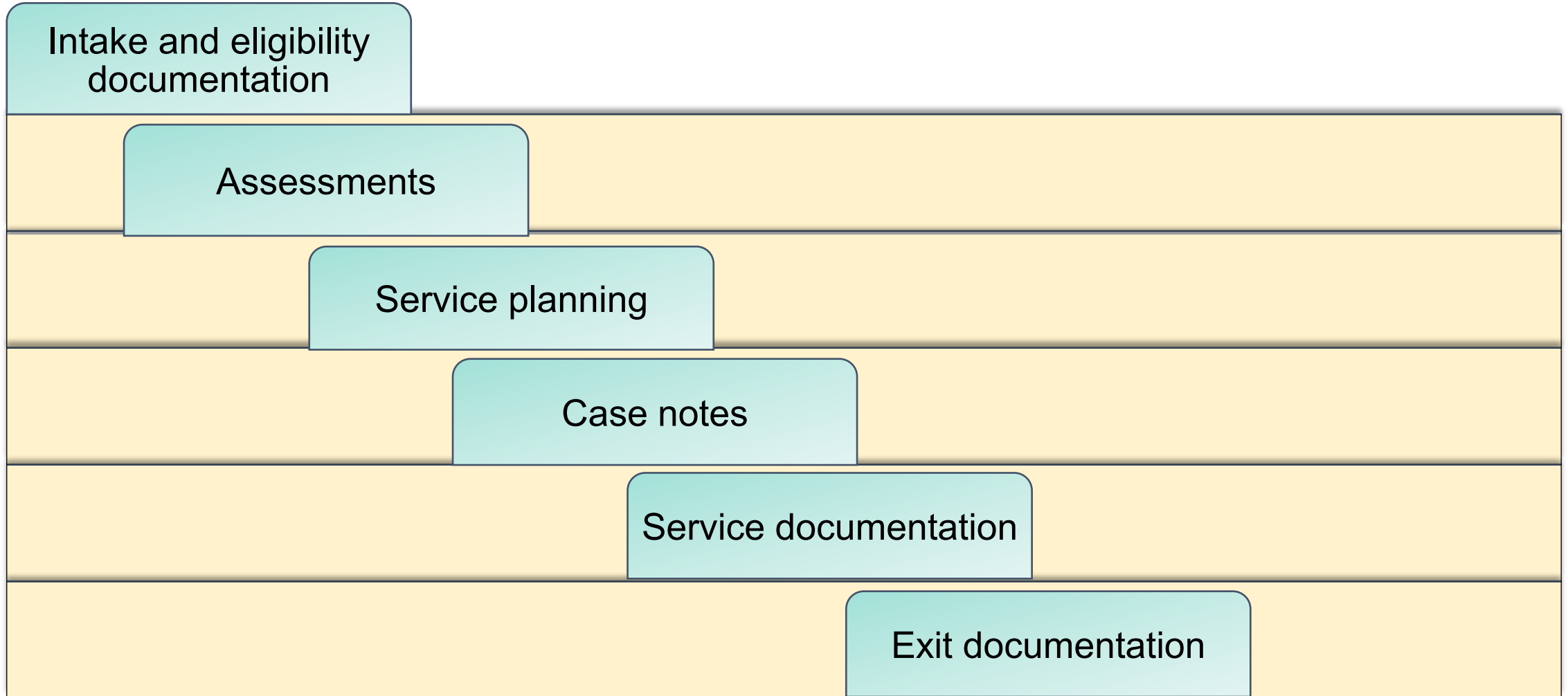
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Where does your program have room for improvement on youth files?

# Building Strong Youth Case Files



# Core Components of Youth Case Files



A person wearing a yellow sweater is sitting at a desk, working with a laptop and a large stack of papers. The person's hands are visible, one holding a piece of paper and the other near the laptop. The desk is cluttered with papers, some with colorful tabs, and a laptop. The background is blurred, showing a window and some office equipment.

# Best Practices for Documentation

- Clear and objective case notes
- Consistent file organization
- Timely documentation
- Youth-centered language
- Regular supervisory review

# Common Challenges

- Incomplete documentations
- Inconsistent case notes
- Files are difficult to navigate
- Timeliness issues
- Staff training and consistency

# Strong Youth Files Tell a Story

Why the youth entered the program?

What services the youth received?

What progress the youth made?

What challenges the youth faced?

Why the youth exited?

What happened after exit?



# Reflection

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When you think about youth files at your program, what is one word that comes to mind?

# Introducing: The Youth Files Toolkit



# Youth Files Toolkit

- Designed to support RHY program documentation
- Organizes file structure
- Provides documentation guidance
- Supports monitoring readiness
- Adaptable for different program types



# What's Included?

- Eligibility
- Youth File Checklists
- Consents, Releases, & Referrals
- Case Notes
- Aftercare Planning

# Reducing the Barrier to Entry

- Intake forms are typically long and repetitive
- Completing long intake forms can intimidate young people
- Many programs have half completed intake forms due to losing contact
- Streamline and standardize the process

# Example of a Low Barrier Intake Schedule

- **Day 1: Basic Requirements and Needs**
  - Housing & Immediate Needs
  - What paperwork do you absolutely need to complete today to provide a young person with immediate shelter?
- **Day 2: Interview, Assessment, and Case Plans**
  - Building connection and establishing care
- **Day 3: Linkage Partners and Ongoing Services**
  - Referrals to partners to provide individualized care
- **Day 4: Catch- Up Day**
  - Anything that has been missed

# Eligibility

- Common area of findings during FYSB monitoring reviews
- Pro Tip: Complete eligibility forms as early in the assessment process as possible
- Ensure you follow the specific eligibility requirements detailed in your grant

# Example: Proof of Eligibility Form

Intake and eligibility documentation

## PROOF OF ELIGIBILITY FORM

The Eligibility Verification should be updated to match the eligibility criteria for the program's specific grant, the population the program identified in their Project Narrative, and to meet any Coordinated Entry or State/Local-Mandated requirements. This form is designed to be completed with the young person. Verifying a YYAs eligibility to receive services helps ensure programs remain in compliance with both federal and state regulations and helps avoid common non-compliance findings such as providing respite care.

### RHY Service Eligibility Documentation

Youth's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

- Is age eligible
  - BCP-Youth is younger than 18 <sup>16</sup>
  - TLP/MGH- Youth is younger than 22 but not younger than 16
- Cannot live safely with a parent, legal guardian, or relative, and who has no other safe alternative living arrangement
- Is not mandated to enter by law enforcement
- Is not in the custody of child welfare, juvenile justice or other system
- Is not referred for respite for caregiver, custodian abandoning caregiver responsibilities, or superseding legal obligations

_____ Youth/Young Adult Signature	_____ Date
_____ Staff Printed Name	_____ Title
_____ Staff Signature	_____ Date

<sup>16</sup> A BCP may shelter youth over 18 years of age if there is a state or local law (including a regulation) allowing a higher maximum age in compliance with licensure requirements for child- and youth-serving facilities.

If you provide shelter to youth ages 18 and older in the same shelter facility as youth ages 17 and younger, your shelter must have separate sleeping rooms for the two age groups.

You must also have a clear and detailed plan in place to ensure that minors are safe and secure when using bathrooms and showers, participating in shelter programming (such as counseling and life skills groups), and participating in recreational activities.

# File Checklists

- ❑ Helps ensure files are complete and organized
- ❑ Supports consistency across staff
- ❑ Useful for onboarding and training new staff
- ❑ Helps programs prepare for monitoring
- ❑ Can be used for supervisory file reviews

# Example: Youth Intake Paperwork File Checklist

Intake and eligibility documentation

## File Checklist Example

### Recommended Youth Intake Paperwork

(For this section only - required documents in the below list are in bold.)

- Organizational referral from third-party or self-referral documents, or other form that captures demographic information and history**
- Clear, recent photo of young person labeled with date and full name<sup>2</sup>
- Clear photocopies of personal documents<sup>3</sup>
  - Photo ID
  - Social Security card
  - Birth certificate
  - Insurance/Medicaid Card (front and back)
- Organizational specific "Releases of Information" for all appropriate contacts/partners and emergency contacts
- Income/non-income verification forms to assist with applying for appropriate programs (e.g. WIC, SNAP, jobs and educations programs, housing programs, etc.)
- Eligibility Verification**
- Intake Assessment identified by agency**
- If partnered with a Rapid Rehousing program or mental health provider include copies of appropriate paperwork
- HMIS data privacy notice and consent document signed by young person
- HMIS release of information signed by young person
- HMIS intake packet
- HMIS exit packet when appropriate
- HMIS interim update packet when appropriate
- Progress notes<sup>4</sup>**
- Consent and Notification Forms**
- Handbook**
- Aftercare Plan and Contact Forms<sup>5</sup>**
- Fill in additional forms here

#### [Search Screening Tools](#)

This web page helps you easily search and access screening and assessment tools relevant to serving youth and young adults. It allows you to search by various criteria to narrow down a review of 160+ tools.

# Standardize Files by Having Standard File Sections

## Cover Sheets for File Sections

### File Section 1: IDENTIFICATION

- Clear Photo of Young Person with date and full name
- Photo ID
- Social Security Card
- Birth Certificate
- Insurance/Medicaid Card (front and back)

### File Section 2: GENERAL INTAKE INFORMATION

- **Referral Form**
- Income Verification
- **Eligibility Verification**
- **Consent and Notification Forms**
- Handbook

### File Section 3: HMIS INFORMATION

- HMIS data privacy notice and consent document
- HMIS release of information
- HMIS intake packet
- HMIS exit packet
- HMIS interim update packet completed for every life change or every 60 days (about 2 months)

### File Section 4: PARTNER MATERIALS

- Release of Information for each partner agency
- External Referral Forms
- Organizations fill in additional forms here

### File Section 5: CASE NOTES, CONTACT FORMS, AND ASSESSMENT

- **Progress Notes**
- **Assessment**
- Organizations fill in additional forms here

### File Section 6: AFTERCARE or FOLLOW-UP

- **Aftercare Plan/Summary**
- Copy of Lease (if applicable)
- Aftercare Notes with dates
- Organizations fill in additional forms here

# Consents, Releases, & Referrals

- The first step for any intake process should be to complete consent, release, and referrals forms for both internal and external services
- Document youth permission and information sharing
- Support confidentiality and informed consent
- Important for partner service coordination
- Should be signed, dated, and current
- Staff should know where these forms are located



# Case Notes

- Document all services provided
- Should be objective and clear
- Should connect to service plans
- Should be timely
- Should tell the story of youth progress

# Case Plans Tied to Four Core Outcomes Areas

Service planning

## CASE PLAN

Client's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Case Manager<sup>14</sup>: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Case Plan will be reviewed and updated with YYA every \_\_\_\_\_ days.

Description of Case Planning Process including estimated timeline, youth engagement, goals, etc.:


\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Outcome: Basic Needs	
Objectives/Goals:	Target Completion Date:
Plan to obtain goal:	
Short-term steps/resources to be utilized to reach goal:	
Date goal was met:	Barriers to meeting goal:
Goal completion summary:	

# Case Notes Examples

## UNCLEAR

Met with youth today. We talked about school and housing.  
The youth seemed upset but okay.  
Will follow up next week.



## CLEAR

Met with youth for a scheduled case management session. Youth reported difficulty attending school due to transportation barriers. Discussed bus pass options and provided an application for a reduced fare pass. Reviewed housing plan and confirmed youth remains on waitlist for transitional housing program. Youth appeared frustrated about delays but engaged in problem-solving. Plan to follow up next week regarding the transportation application and the housing waitlist status.

# Activity: Rewrite the Case Notes #1

## Case Note

Met with youth today. Talked about school and transportation. Youth is having trouble getting there. Will follow up.

- A** Met with youth to discuss school attendance and transportation barriers. Youth stated transportation has been difficult. Staff will continue to follow up.
- B** Met with youth on 5/7 to discuss ongoing transportation barriers impacting school attendance. Youth reported missing two days of school this week due to lack of reliable transportation. Staff reviewed available transportation options and plans to coordinate with school support staff. Follow-up meeting scheduled for next week.
- C** Youth is struggling with transportation and school. Staff talked with them about getting to school and will monitor the situation.

# Activity: Rewrite the Case Notes #2

## Case Note

Helped youth with job search. Youth applied for some jobs and is waiting to hear back.

- A** Met with youth to support employment goals. Assisted youth with job search activities and reviewed available employment opportunities. Youth submitted multiple applications and is waiting to hear back from employers.
- B** Provided employment-related case management services to youth. Youth completed several job applications and demonstrated continued engagement in employment planning. Staff encouraged youth to continue monitoring responses from employers and to maintain communication regarding next steps.
- C** Met with youth for employment support services. Staff assisted youth with completing and submitting three online job applications. Youth identified interest in retail and food service positions and discussed transportation options for potential employment. Staff plans to follow up regarding application status during next meeting.

# Activity: Rewrite the Case Notes #3

## Case Note

Youth was upset and having issues with another resident. Staff talked with them and everything is okay now.

- A** Youth reported conflict with another resident during the evening. Staff met with youth individually to discuss the situation and provide support. Youth stated they felt better after the conversation and agreed to continue communicating with staff if concerns continue.
- B** Youth appeared upset following a disagreement with another resident in the program. Staff provided supportive intervention and reviewed conflict resolution strategies with the youth. Youth was able to de-escalate and return to normal activities following the discussion. Staff will continue to monitor the situation and provide support as needed.
- C** Met with youth regarding interpersonal conflict with another resident. Staff discussed appropriate communication and encouraged youth to avoid further issues. Youth reported the issue had been resolved at the end of the meeting.

# Aftercare Planning

- Documents planning for youth after program exit
- Includes housing, employment, education, and supports
- Shows continuity of care
- Begins before program exit
- Demonstrates program outcomes and transition planning

# Begin Aftercare Planning During Intake

## AFTERCARE PLAN

### SECTION 1: To be completed during Intake

Date of Intake: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Discharge: \_\_\_\_\_

Youth's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_

Prospective Transition Plan:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### SECTION 2: To be completed upon discharge

Youth Contact Information:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Name:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Contact Information:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Reason for Discharge:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Destination at Discharge: \_\_\_\_\_

Address:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Verification of safe arrival at discharge location: \_\_\_\_\_

Summary of activities during youth's stay:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What external referrals were made and what is the current status of those? Include any relevant service notes here, including additional follow up needed:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Document All Follow-Up

Aftercare

Summary of Planned Aftercare Supports/Services:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Dates of Planned Aftercare Contacts: (Can be completed on or slightly before the date.)

30 Days After Discharge	60 Days After Discharge	90 Days After Discharge

\_\_\_\_\_  
Youth/Young Adult Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Staff Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**SECTION 3: Aftercare Contact Reports**

**AFTERCARE CONTACT REPORT**

**30-Day Contact**

Date of Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Youth's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact with the YYA Successful:  Successful Contact  Attempted Contact

How Was Contact Made:  Email  Social Media  Phone  In-Person

What is the current living arrangement of the youth? Is youth still in a safe, stable environment?  
\_\_\_\_\_

What aftercare activities were completed or attempted during this contact:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

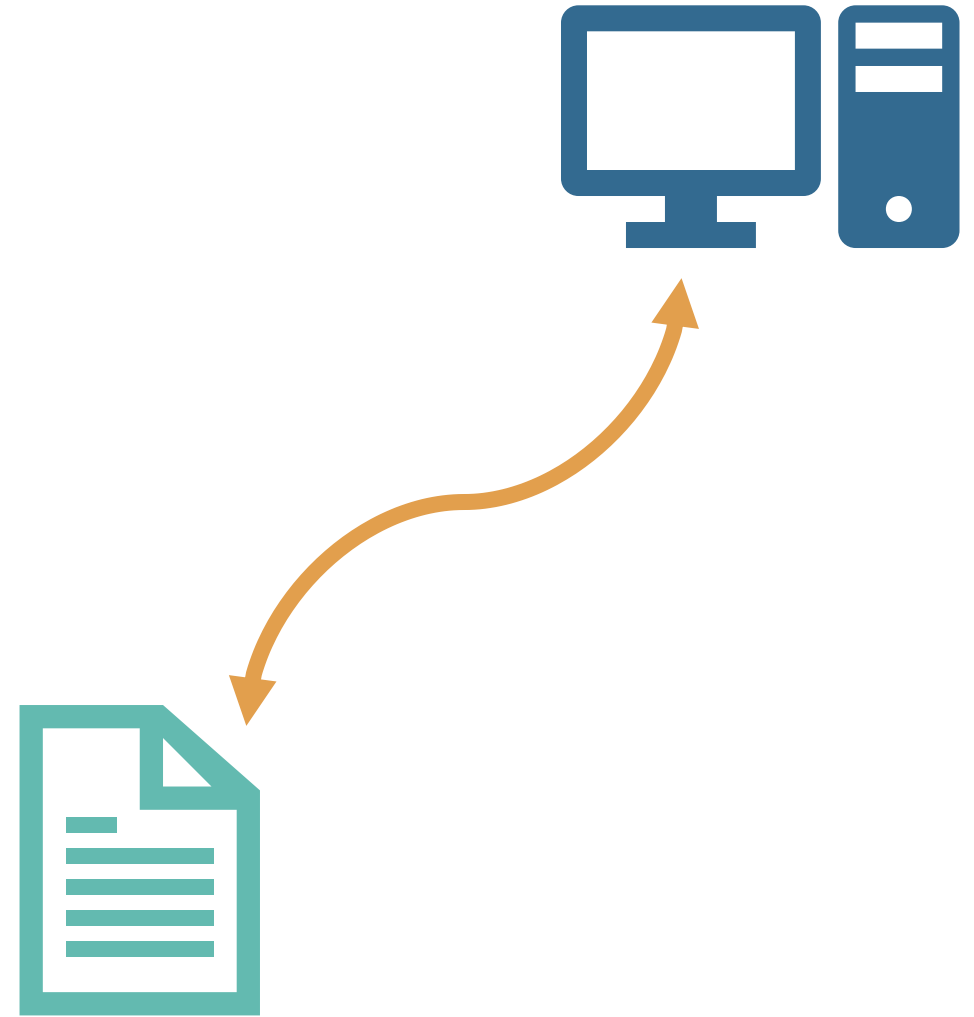
Were additional needs/services identified for future contacts? If so, please describe.  
\_\_\_\_\_

# How These Sections Work Together

- Eligibility shows youth meet the appropriate criteria to receive services under the RHY program
- Consents and releases support service coordination
- Case notes document services provided
- Aftercare planning documents transition and next steps
- File checklists help ensure everything is complete

# Flexibility of the Toolkit

- Paper vs. electronic files
- Programs can adapt sections
- Add program-specific forms
- Remove sections that don't apply
- Goal is organization and consistency



# Key Takeaways



# Key Takeaways

Youth files support service delivery and compliance



Organization and consistency are key



Documentation should be clear and objective



The toolkit can support program improvements

# Practical Tips for Programs

- Standardized structures prevent missing documents
- Train **all** staff on documentation expectations
- Review files regularly
- Write case notes no more than 48 hours after services
- Connect case notes to service plans
- Start aftercare planning early

# Breakout 1

## Core Questions

- **What part of documentation does your program do well?**
- **What part of documentation is most challenging for staff?**
- **Where do files tend to be incomplete or inconsistent?**

### Additional Questions/Food for Thought:

- What does your current youth case file structure look like?
- How does your current system align with monitoring expectations?
- Which section of the Youth Case File Toolkit would be most helpful for your program?
- What is one change you could realistically implement in the next 30–60 days?

# Breakout 2

## BCP Specific Questions

### ***Focus on short stays, intake, crisis services***

- How do you document services when youth stay only a short time?
- What documentation tends to get missed when things are busy?
- How could the toolkit help with fast-paced documentation environments?

### **Additional Questions/Food for thought:**

- How do you ensure intake and eligibility documentation are completed quickly?
- What are your challenges with consent and intake documentation?
- How do you document crisis services or brief interactions?

# Breakout 2

## SOP Specific Questions

***Focus on field documentation, engagement, and unreliable contact***

- What challenges exist with documenting services in the field?
- How do you balance relationship-building with documentation requirements?
- Which toolkit sections could be adapted for outreach documentation?

**Additional Questions/Food for thought:**

- How do you currently document outreach contacts and services?
- How do you ensure consistency across outreach staff?
- What documentation is most difficult in outreach settings?

# Breakout 2

## TLP Specific Questions

***Focus on long-term case management, service plans, and aftercare***

- How do case notes reflect progress toward independence or parenting goals?
- Where are the biggest documentation gaps in long-term programs?
- How could the toolkit help standardize long-term documentation?

**Additional Questions/Food for thought:**

- How are service plans developed and updated over time?
- How do you document life skills, education, employment, and housing progress?
- How do you document aftercare or transition planning?

# Breakout 2

## MGH Specific Questions

***Focus on long-term case management, service plans, aftercare***

- How are service plans developed and updated over time?
- How do you document parenting support services?
- How could the toolkit help standardize long-term documentation?

**Additional Questions/Food for thought:**

- How do case notes reflect progress toward independence or parenting goals?
- How do you document life skills, education, employment, and housing progress?
- How do you document aftercare or transition planning?
- Where are the biggest documentation gaps in long-term programs?