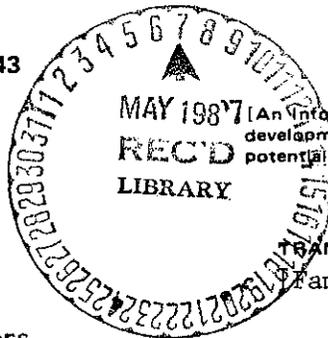


NEW YORK STATE
 DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
 40 NORTH PEARL STREET, ALBANY, NEW YORK 12243

CESAR A. PERALES
 Commissioner



[An Informational Letter informs local districts of potential developments in the Social Services field, or of actual or potential developments in collateral fields of interest.]

INFORMATIONAL LETTER

TRANSMITTAL NO.: 87 INF-24
 [Family & Children's Services]

TO: Social Services Commissioners
 Executive Directors

SUBJECT: Permanency Planning Skill:
 The Formulation of Client Service Goals

DATE: May 5, 1987

SUGGESTED DISTRIBUTION: Social Services Districts
 Child Placement Agencies
 Child Welfare Supervisors
 Staff Development Coordinators

CONTACT PERSON: Any questions about this release should be directed to Fred Cantlo, Regional Director, Metropolitan Regional Office, telephone 212-488-3485; John O'Connor, Regional Director, Eastern Regional Office, telephone 518-473-1095; Karen Schimke, Regional Director, Buffalo Regional Office, telephone 716-847-3145; Frank Petrus, Regional Director, Western Regional Office, telephone 716-238-8200.

I. Purpose

This letter has two purposes. The first is to emphasize the importance of having client service goals that are completed for the DSS 3626 and DSS 3627 forms of a child's Uniform Case Record.

The second purpose is to identify a recommended action plan that can be expected to assist foster care and permanency planning staffs in learning principles that can help them in formulating appropriate client service goals.

FILING REFERENCES

Previous INFs/ADMs	Dept. Regs.	Social Services Law and Other Legal References	Bulletin/Chapter Reference	Miscellaneous References
	Section 428.7 Section 428.9			Uniform Case Record (UCR) Desk Aid pages 100, 102 DSS 3626 - 4, 5, 6, 7 DSS 3627 - 5, 6, 7

II. Background

Enactment of the 1979 Child Welfare Reform Act stimulated the integration of permanency as a service concept and increased agency awareness of the importance of case planning. An aspect of case planning that challenges the skill and ability of all workers is that of formulating appropriate client service goals. Service goals that are clear and appropriate facilitate permanency planning activity. Service goals that are not clear and are inappropriate impede permanency.

Some agency workers are having difficulty in formulating clear and appropriate client service goals. This is a general impression from reviewing agency case records in connection with the Department's Utilization Review, Master Assessment, and related monitoring activity. Frequently, case records are found with service goals that are vaguely written, difficult to understand and formulated without the participation of the client. The consequences are that many case records have lacked the focus for effective and productive service and have deprived clients of the chance to use their energy and motivation efficiently and purposefully.

NOTE: Client service goals should be distinguished from permanency planning goals which describe the most desirable and realistic living arrangements that are to be secured for each child who is receiving services.

III. Program Implications

- A. Establishing service goals for children and parents is recognized as essential for all programs concerned with achieving permanency for children. Service goals help all who are involved in a case to have the same focus and to be clear about the behavioral and environmental changes that will be necessary to make permanency possible. By clarifying priorities, service goals help to motivate clients and to guide them in the use and concentration of their energy for efficient problem solving. Having clearly formulated service goals gives the client psychological direction. Clients move towards the goals and objectives when they understand their positive implications.
- B. Services to children and families is facilitated by service goals that are consciously established and mutually agreed upon by the client and the worker. The client's view of the problem, the function of the agency, and the worker's assessment form the basis for the establishment of mutual goals.
- C. When clear and relevant service goals are formulated there is generally a sense of purpose to each interview and the probability of productive verbal communication is enhanced. In contrast, interviews lacking a sense of purpose to clients are frequently characterized by the absence of productive communication.
- D. Setting client service goals is a basic skill that is acquired through on-going supervision and systematic in-service training. Although proficiency in formulating client service goals is to be expected of all workers and supervisors, achieving proficiency in formulating client

be recognized as difficult, if not impossible, when workers and supervisors are not clear about their agency's program policies and lack the skill to define and assess the psycho-social problems of children and their families.

- E. Like the assessment process the goal formulation and reformulation processes continue until service is discontinued. A worker has responsibility to give the client pertinent assessment data, to help clients achieve a new perception of themselves and their situation and to enable them to reformulate or expand their service goals.

IV. Recommended Action Plan

- A. Provide all staff with assignments requiring permanency planning skill to have an opportunity to study and assimilate the following principles and properties of well formulated client service goal statements.

1. The desired end behavior or condition is clearly specified.
2. The contingencies under which the behavior is to occur is specified.
3. The standards of performance are specified, including a completion date or time frame.
4. The goals recognize major problems and opportunity areas.
5. The goals are realistic and are attainable.
6. The goals are measurable and describe under what conditions the outcome will be demonstrated.

NOTE: Simple, direct language is a trademark of effective professional communication.

7. The goals are constructed in an active voice.

Note: See Appendix A for examples of client goals based upon the above principles.

- B. Provide all staff with assignments requiring permanency planning skill with an opportunity for learning about the errors that are commonly made in formulating client service goals:

1. The goal is not reasonable. Concepts should not be used that are not reasonably well defined or that are likely to be arbitrarily defined in different ways by different staff.
2. The goal is too low. There is no challenge to the individual.
3. The goal is too high. The goal cannot be attained.
4. The time frame for goal achievement is unrealistic. It is either too long or too short.

5. The goal is conceptualized in terms of what is intended rather than in what will result from actions that are taken.
6. The wording of the goals is burdened by professional jargon or overused words such as "maximize", "minimize", "increase", "decrease", "improve", etc.
7. The goals were negative rather than positive.

Note: See Appendix B for examples of common errors in formulating client goals.

C. Encourage staff to refer to the following guidelines in developing client service goals for the UCR:

1. A useful and effective goal statement depends upon an assessment that has considered the client's realities, including the nature of the core problems as seen and defined by the client or as the client was helped to view the problem during intake. The motivation of the client should have been considered and clarified. Other relevant factors are age, length of time the problem existed, and the client's resources. These include values, capacities, such as the ability to form relationships, and, also, the presence of a support system. Community resources, time available to work at goal related tasks, and the ability and readiness of the agency to assist the client in working at goal related tasks represent other client realities that have to be considered in the formulation of the client goal statement.
2. The first service goal should be one that is easiest for the client to achieve. Knowing or believing that a goal can be achieved engenders feelings of hope and should help clients to feel confident about coping with their problem situation.
3. The urgency of each problem that has beset a client is a factor that should be carefully evaluated in assisting the client to identify goal related tasks/activity that should be given priority. Such guidance is especially important when clients are anxious and under stress in more than one area of their lives. Often the most urgent problem is the largest and most complex; partialization of such a problem is a technique that divides a problem into smaller, more manageable parts.
4. Clients will respond positively to suggested service goals requiring activity that restores a sense of personal competence and instills confidence in their ability to control and regulate their lives. This is especially important to individuals (children and adults) who have been overwhelmed and immobilized by a personal disaster such as abandonment, assault, rejection, etc. or by a perception that their situation is hopeless.
5. Service goals should be defined in specific behaviors or consequences that will be an indication of the resolution or modification of the condition or problems that had either made

the placement of a child necessary and/or had disorganized and destabilized family life.

6. Service goals should be interrelated to avoid fragmented ineffective, and inefficient services.

D. For staff with casework responsibilities promote a conceptual understanding through supervision and in service training of case assessment and the ability to summarize each case assessment in a logical progression from data to conclusions that provide an explanation of an individual's or a family's behavior and situation.

V. Additional Information

A. The Child Welfare Case Recording Curriculum produced by the Continuing Education Program at SUNYA's School of Social Welfare includes a module on goal oriented planning. Regular and periodic review of this module is recommended for all foster care and permanency planning staff. A copy of the curriculum may be borrowed from the Department's Materials Resource Center, One Commerce Plaza, Room 725, Albany, New York 12260.

B. Appendices A and B are intended for use in the orientation of foster care workers on the formulation of client service goals for the DSS 3626 and DSS 3627 forms.

C. Technical assistance may be requested from the Department's regional offices with regard to:

1. Assessing the effectiveness of current agency practice at formulating client service goals.

2. Developing in-service training programs for improving staff skills in formulating client service goals.

D. Additional copies of this release may be ordered from the Department's Forms and Publications Section, 40 North Pearl Street, Albany, New York 12243.



Joseph Semidei
Deputy Commissioner
Division of Family and
Children Services

Appendix A

The Principles and Properties of Well
Formulated Service Goal Statements

The examples that follow of client goal statements have presupposed the completion of an initial case assessment of a fictitious family, Mr. and Mrs. Roe and their children Jane and John. The service goal statements should be regarded as tentative formulations by the caseworker requiring modification as the case situation becomes clearer, the circumstances/conditions of the Roe family change, and the parents and the children are engaged in discussions about their problems and their service goals.

To understand a caseworker's probable rationale for the tentative service goals statements below, it should be assumed that the history of the Roe family includes the following: For several years both parents had had a pathological alcoholic pattern that resulted in the serious neglect and occasional mistreatment of their adolescent children. Protection of the children required their placement in foster care with the initial permanency planning goal to return Jane and John to their parents when they had recovered with the help of A.A. from their alcoholism and demonstrated a readiness and capacity to care for their children. While in care the agency found that the social adjustment and the socialization of both children had suffered as a result of mistreatment, parental neglect, social isolation, and a depressed family life. Problematic and symptomatic behavior of the children included John's fighting and temper tantrums, Jane's negativism, and truancy by both children. The agency regarded the problematic and symptomatic behavior of the children as a reaction to the prolonged frustration of normal needs as well as representing, to some extent, an adaptation to the dysfunctioning and alcoholic lifestyle of their parents. Therefore, if a pattern of sobriety were to be sustained by the recovering parents the children themselves would need agency guidance in not only resolving the conflicts and hostile feeling they have towards their parents but, also, in developing the social and emotional strengths that would parallel the improvement the agency anticipates in the social and emotional functioning of Mr. and Mrs. Roe.

1. The desired end behavior or condition is clearly specified:

Examples

- a. John will acquire the skill to play one or more competitive games that are appropriate for the adolescent male.
- b. Jane will feel stronger and happier by learning the rules for healthy living.
- c. Mr. and Mrs. Roe will support each other's effort at achieving a pattern of sobriety by being positive and open with each other and by attending all scheduled A.A. meetings.

2. The contingencies under which the behavior is to occur is specified.

Examples

- a. John will learn the meaning of perseverance, cooperation, and fair play by participation in a competitive, supervised athletic program.

- b. Mr. and Mrs. Roe will cooperate with the parent aid who will support their efforts to prepare for John's and Jane's home visit.
3. The standards of performance is specified, including a completion date or time frame.

Examples

- a. In competitive games, John will learn to make positive remarks and smile while congratulating players on the winning team.
 - b. By the end of the year Jane will have the confidence and skill to be able to assert herself positively and to communicate effectively with her parents.
4. The goals recognize major problems and opportunity areas:

Examples

- a. John will learn that the way to be promoted is by attending each class regularly and completing his daily lessons and assignments.
 - b. Jane will make friends and have a peer support group as a result of attending the family planning workshops.
 - c. Mr. and Mrs. Roe's erratic methods of discipline will be replaced by fairness, firmness and the kind of consistency that will help the children to learn and gradually accept parental rules and standards of conduct.
5. The goals are realistic in concept and are attainable.

Examples

- a. John will use the knowledge and interpersonal skills that he learns in the school's athletic programs to establish himself as a leader among his peers.
 - b. Mr. and Mrs. Roe will attend the Alcoholics Anonymous program on a regular basis until they recover from their alcoholism and have an established pattern of sobriety.
6. The goals are measurable and describe under what conditions the outcome will be demonstrated.

Examples

- a. John will be able to ask his teachers questions when he doesn't understand a lesson or an assignment.
 - b. Jane will attend school full time and will receive a high school diploma at the end of the year.
7. The goals are constructed in the active voice.

Examples

- a. By the end of the semester John will have a plan for improving his academic performance when he returns to public school next fall.
- b. Jane will learn a business skill that will qualify her for a full time job when she graduates.
- c. Mr. and Mrs. Roe will acquire the knowledge and skills that are needed in planning home visits for John and Jane that will be enjoyed and free of conflict and tensions.

Appendix B

Common Errors in Formulating Client Goals

1. The goal is not reasonable. Concepts should not be used that are not reasonably well defined or that are likely to be arbitrarily defined in different ways by different staff.

Examples

- a. John will behave with more decorum.
- b. Jane will associate only with normal teenagers.

2. The goal is too low. There is no challenge to the individual.

Examples

- a. John will continue his participation in the after school program.
- b. Jane will acquire a new wardrobe that enhances her self-image.

3. The goal is too high. The goal cannot be obtained.

Examples

- a. John will be prepared to lecture on the lessons to be learned from losing a game instead of finding fault with the performance of his team mates.
- b. Jane will design and make her own clothes after she takes a home economics class.

4. The time frame for goal achievement is unrealistic. It is either too long or too short.

Examples

- a. By the end of the month John will know the meaning of more than 100 new words for describing his dissatisfaction and anger.
- b. By the end of a year Jane will have learned to prepare well balanced meals for herself.

5. The goal is conceptualized in terms of what is intended rather than in what will result from actions that are taken.

Examples

- a. John will stop gloating over the misfortune of others.
(Acceptable Alternative Goal -- John will learn that he can avoid arguments and fights by not gloating over the misfortune of others.)

- b. Jane will return to her home with the power to influence the thinking and behavior of her parents.
(Acceptable Alternative Goal -- Jane will develop a vocabulary that can be used to influence the thinking and behavior of her parents.)
6. The wording of the goals is burdened by professional jargon or overused words such as "maximize", "minimize", "increase", "decrease", "improve", etc.

Examples

- a. John will effectuate meaningful change in the family structure by his new, improved verbal facility.
 - b. Jane will impact the peer group with her knowledge of alcoholism.
7. The goals were negative rather than positive:

Examples

- a. John will not complain about the rules when he is losing a game.
 - b. Jane will never date a boy without her mother's knowledge.