

Case Notes

Intended Audience

- All ARIES Users
- Managers and Supervisors
- Medi-Cal Waiver Program Providers

Policy Background

Well-documented case notes are essential for preserving and communicating information, for the continuity of care, and for medicolegal purposes. In the past, many providers handwrote their notes and filed them in hardcopy client charts.

ARIES has the potential to change this business practice. Providers may opt to continue to write their case notes on paper or in an electronic medical record system. Or they may enter case notes directly into ARIES, as the client is being seen, or immediately after the visit.

The Case Notes feature in ARIES has many benefits. Once entered, they can be easily read. In ARIES, staff with the appropriate user permissions can easily access, search, and print case notes. There is no need to pull a client chart and sift through pages of notes. Case notes can be shared within an agency. Shared case notes that have been signed and sealed with certain exceptions can also be viewed by other agencies serving share clients.

Procedures

The procedures below describe different aspects of the Case Notes feature.

Labeling – Providers should assign a subject-specific type and category to each case note. Using the most descriptive type and category will facilitate searching in the future. The available options are:

Type	Category	
Case Conference	Adherence	Housing
Client Update	Administrative	Impressions
Crisis Note	Benefits	Incident Report
Initial Assessment	Client Contact	Legal
Progress Report	Dental	Medical
Service Assessment	Education/Training	Mental Health
	Employment	Nutrition
	Family/Social Support	Presenting Problem
	Financial	Risk Reduction
	Health Education	Substance Use

Sharing – Case notes categorized as (1) Incident Report, (2) Legal, (3) Mental Health, or (4) Substance Use are treated as non-shared notes regardless of clients' share status.

Case notes marked with any other category will also be treated as non-share by default. However, users can share these other categories of notes by simply unchecking the "Don't share" box on the Case Notes screen. When the user saves the note, a pop-up message will ask for confirmation: "You are about to share this note. Select Cancel if it includes any mental health, substance use, or other sensitive information. Select OK to Save." This is to prevent providers from mistakenly sharing sensitive information in the notes (e.g., writing a Housing note that discusses the client's drug use).

Entering – Most case notes can be easily and quickly entered into ARIES. However, providers should be aware that ARIES times-out after 30 minutes. For lengthier case notes, providers may:

- Enter several smaller notes about the same visit labeled with different types and/or categories. For instance, a provider can enter case notes about a client's medical, financial, and substance abuse status all from the same screen. ARIES separates these case notes into individual, but linked, entries, which saves time, helps organize notes more efficiently, and maintains confidentiality where required.
- Compose their case notes in Microsoft Word or another word processing program, and then copy and paste the text into ARIES. For security purposes, providers should not save their initial case notes on their computer.

Signing and Sealing – Signing and sealing a case note serves as an electronic signature. It ensures that case notes will not be altered. Moreover, other agencies serving share clients can only view shared notes once they have been signed and sealed.

Amending – Once a case note has been signed and sealed in ARIES, it cannot be removed or altered. As with a hardcopy case note, if a mistake is discovered or if a revision is needed, an additional note must be entered into ARIES that references the original note and states the correction.

Archiving – Case notes pertaining to Medi-Cal Waiver Program (MCWP) clients must be printed out on at least a monthly basis. Each case note needs to be hand signed by the author and must then be filed in the client's paper chart. This requirement only pertains to MCWP.

Compliance Monitoring

Agency managers may wish to monitor whether case notes are unsigned. The Unsigned Case Notes Report displays the client, staff person, and date of note for all unsigned case notes. The report can be filtered by the last name of staff person. To run the report,

- Select "Management" from the Reports menu in ARIES.
- Click on the Unsigned Case Notes link.
- To run a report on:
 - An individual staff member, click the drop down and choose "Equals" and then enter the last name of the staff member.

- All staff members, leave the fields blank.
- Click the Report button.

Some Administrative Agencies (AA) and individual agencies may have additional requirements regarding case notes. Agencies should check with their AAs.

Additional Information

- Providers needing assistance with the Case Notes feature should consult the ARIES User Manual by pressing the F1 key while in ARIES or call the ARIES Help Desk at 1-866-411-ARIES (2743).

Related Policies

- ARIES Policy Notice No. G2 regarding ARIES Data Extraction