

THE ESSENCE OF THE “CASE MANAGEMENT” SYSTEM AND THE POSSIBILITIES OF ITS APPLICATION IN THE SOCIAL SERVICE SYSTEM OF AZERBAIJAN

Mayis Aliyev*, Aygun Muradli

Azerbaijan University, Baku, Azerbaijan

Abstract

The “Case Management” system plays a crucial role in addressing the complex needs of individuals and families in challenging social circumstances, particularly in the context of Azerbaijan's social service system. Emphasized within the “State Program for the Development of Social Services in the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2023-2026”, this method underscores the importance of early intervention and preventive measures to mitigate social risks and support vulnerable populations effectively. The approach involves tailored services, coordinated efforts across agencies, ongoing monitoring and systematic evaluation, aiming to enhance client outcomes and ensure comprehensive care. As a systematic process, case management integrates various services to meet evolving client needs, fostering inter-agency collaboration and enhancing social welfare provision in Azerbaijan.

Keywords

Case management, social service system, social work intervention, risk group identification, interagency coordination.

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1. Introduction

In the “State Program for the Development of Social Services in the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2023-2026” approved by the Order of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan dated August 28, 2023 No.4059, social intervention and it is emphasized that there is a need to identify and apply prevention mechanisms with the implementation of appropriate social support measures. The measures to be taken in this direction include the organization of training of social workers in connection with the “Case Management” system applied during social work with persons (families) who are in difficult living conditions or at risk of falling into difficult living conditions, that system creation of an electronic version and provision of social work with persons (families) who are in difficult life conditions or at risk of falling into difficult life conditions through this system. Case management method should be widely applied and rules and standards related to this process should be developed.

One of the main problems faced by the social service system in solving the social problems of people in difficult life conditions is early identification of the social problems of that category of people. For that purpose, the case management method is the main

*Corresponding Author: Mayis Aliyev, e-mail: Mayis.Aliyev@au.edu.az

method used by the world's leading countries and this method has been widely used in recent times. The process of case management begins to be applied from the moment when difficulties arise in a person's life. In the countries where case management is widely applied, it also attracts attention due to its positive influence on the development of inter-institutional cooperation and coordination activities. It can be characterized as a process consisting of assessing the needs of a person in difficult living conditions, providing a package of services to eliminate these needs, coordinating social work, organizing monitoring of services, evaluating and closing the case (<https://e-qanun.az/framework/55044>).

Case management process

Social work applies the method of “Case management” intervention to support families who can not provide protection for their children as a result of exposure to a crisis situation. Social work is closely related to the meaning of “case management”, “social case”. “Case management” means conducting individual, preventive or rehabilitation work with a specific object-child or family by several different specialists by investigating a certain negative event.

Usually, case management specialists focus on the object (family) and its environment; working with the facility directly or indirectly, represents and defends the interests of the client (facility) before different authorities.

“Case management” is an important component of professional social service. Regardless of the direction of activity and subordination of the services, the main goal of applying this social work method is to place the client (child) in the center of attention of all services that can be useful in solving this problem. The customer's needs are always in focus; all decisions must be made to best serve his interests. The work is based on the principles of mutual respect and joint responsibility for decisions. In addition, there is a social worker (“Case Manager”) who is constantly assigned to the client in social work, who acts as a guide between him and the service providers.

It is important to ensure that all services are coordinated towards a common goal, from initial assessment to case closure, with the sequence of “case management” steps being followed.

State enterprises, public associations and others that provide support to children and families can be involved in support work for a specific client. The term “Client” (“Case”) may be viewed differently depending on the direction of the agency implementing “case management”. “Case” may be “woman” for some agencies, “child” or family for others. In our presentation, the “client” is children from dysfunctional families who are experiencing violence and neglect due to crisis situations.

The main goal of “case management” is to optimize the client's functionality by providing support in adequate and effective ways. “Case management” is to improve the quality of support provided to the “client” by eliminating disconnection and fragmentation in social protection. “Case manager” is the implementation of complex measures in a team of specialists representing different fields or agencies to ensure the client's well-being, protect their interests and protect their rights in close, mutual relations.

In the post-Soviet space, “case management” is still an innovation and has not yet been integrated into the child protection system. The traditional social support model for these countries involves the client independently applying to various social service institutions (healthcare, education, social protection, etc.). These institutions individually provide assistance to the client based on their professional priorities. This model does not

involve the active search, discovery and engagement of customers, nor the motivation of customers to change their behavior. In short, the traditional social support model is designed for socially adapted clients; in the traditional model, the client is able to articulate his needs and independently request specific support. Thus, "dysfunctional" families and their children can not benefit from the social protection offered in this model, because their social network, problem-solving skills and awareness level are drastically low.

Carrying out the "case management" method allows for the creation of an effective protection mechanism for children subjected to violence and neglect.

"Case management" broadly refers to the work and methods of service delivery and the roles played by service providers. A case management approach is used in cases involving the elderly, people with physical or mental disabilities, people with AIDS, ex-prisoners, substance abusers, underprivileged children, worker training programs and people at risk.

Case management, sometimes called "clinical case management", "service coordination" or "comprehensive psychosocial improvement", has two important and often conflicting goals: 1) improving the quality of care provided to vulnerable populations; 2) regulate the cost of that care. Although the main goal of case management is to direct and guide the client to the necessary services, at the same time, it can also include tasks of representation and special social work (Ballew & Mink, 1997). Case management can also act as a method to ensure accountability of service systems and service providers (Gibelman & Gelman, 2005).

Throughout history, case management has been given various definitions. Typically, case management is understood as helping people in need understand what kind of help they need and finding personal and community resources that can help them (Rubin, 1992). Case management is a systematic problem-solving mechanism that enables and facilitates the interaction of individuals with the environment. According to the National Association of Social Workers (1984), "case management is a comprehensive program mechanism that meets individual needs by coordinating and integrating the components of the service delivery system". According to Dinerman (1992), case management is "a service function organized or provided by various providers on behalf of the client or the client's family".

According to the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (1994) or as it is now called, the American Association of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, Service coordination (case management) is a process consisting of assessment of wants and needs, planning, placement and provision of supports and services and monitoring (Woodside & McClam, 2011). Individual or family service is a particular strength of the coordination process. To quote the National Conference on Social Welfare (1981), "Case management is an evolving, expanding process shaped by the forces in its environment". The National Association of Social Workers considers case management to be the link between the client and the service system. From all these explanations, it is clear that case management is a kind of coordinating tool that connects various services that meet the unique and changing needs of clients.

Case managers become experts in community resources and serve their clients. This includes government benefits, welfare, jobs, education, childcare, legal aid, housing, transport and leisure opportunities. Case managers know where to go and what procedures a client needs to go through to get help. Sometimes the necessary services are not available

in the country. Therefore, case managers are tasked with implementing strategies that help communities build new resources and systems for their clients.

Effective case management requires availability of realistic and appropriate time frames to ensure a broad and coordinated sequence of appropriate services. Without such a system, case management becomes only an administrative tool that manages clients' access to services. Case management is not just a communication mechanism, but a principle that provides all kinds of necessary services. Unfortunately, service networks rarely live up to expectations. Although case management is seen as a component of a comprehensive system of care, it is not seen as a necessary means of correcting an inadequate or incomplete system. As Moore puts it: "The idea that case management creates a mechanism for coordinating services is a myth, used only to rationalize an existing fragmented situation... And becomes a mechanism for providing services" (Moore, 1992).

Case management is an effective tool, but it is not a panacea that will transcend the boundaries of the institution (Jansson, 2003). If the goal is to ensure access and coordination of necessary services, the case manager must not allow the fragmentation of services and also the natural tendency of bureaucratic organizations towards disorganization.

Position of social workers:

For more than 30 years, the term "case management" broadly refers to the work and methods carried out through service delivery and the roles played by service workers. A case management approach is used in care centers, the elderly, people with physical or mental disabilities, people with AIDS, ex-prisoners, substance abusers, underprivileged children, job training programs and people at risk.

Case management has been given different definitions throughout history. Typically, case management is understood as helping people in need understand what kind of help they need and finding personal and community resources that can help them (Rubin, 1992). Case management is a systematic problem-solving mechanism that enables and facilitates the interaction of individuals with the environment. According to the National Association of Social Workers (1984), "case management is a comprehensive program mechanism that meets individual needs by coordinating and integrating the components of the service delivery system". According to Dinerman (1992), case management is "a service function organized or provided by various providers on behalf of the client or the client's family".

To achieve this goal, the case manager must comply with the following conditions:

- Continuous assessment and accurate assessment of client needs;
- Connect clients with resources appropriate to their needs;
- The ability to ensure the actual delivery of appropriate and necessary services;
- Opportunities to observe the use of services;
- A commitment to evaluate the impacts and outcomes of interventions

If the goal of case management is simply cost recovery or the "least variable" alternative, then the focus of the intervention is on the systematic management of individuals rather than client involvement in the process. There is a difference between case management practice, which serves to implement a service plan and case management systems, which represent the administrative structure and interagency networks within which the case manager operates. Also, the difference between client-oriented and supplier-oriented case management models should be noted. Client-oriented ones are more bureaucratic and clerical, focused on documentation, while others are

closely related to a strong perspective-based and empowerment model, with active client engagement.

What does case management do and in what frameworks?

Social workers specializing in direct practice conduct case management work. Generalist service providers - case and group workers - try to help clients in a structured way according to their wishes, usually in weekly sessions for several weeks or months, using a theoretical practice model of their choice. Most social workers need to get out of their offices and take a look at the social and public environment in which their clients live. In other words, they should help clients by viewing their problems as part of a larger system and find a way out accordingly. The main differences between generalist practice, specialized methods of social work practice and case management are degrees. All three conduct detailed assessments (psycho-social); all set goals and develop intervention plans and stop working when their clients reach their goals. Case managers tend to emphasize using community resources to meet clients' needs. Intervention refers to referring clients to agencies, service organizations, government agencies, educational institutions, community organizations and the right people who can help them. It is common for one of these referrals to be in organizations that offer specialized work or group work services. Ongoing case management relationships with clients typically exist to ensure that their service plan and community relationships are functioning and expanding as needed.

Unfortunately, agency-based caseworkers and group workers often do not have enough time to provide clients with the necessary case management services. They rely on professional case managers with more time and experience working together to refer clients to services in the community.

Improving the psychological state of the family

- Creating opportunities for friendship and information exchange with other parents;

- To make it possible to legally use available resources and social benefits.

Differences of "case management" from the traditional social support model

- That the client's interests and needs are more important than the interests of social service institutions;

- Building skills to utilize community resources for client behavior change and support;

- Comprehensive approach to the "case" taking into account the client's needs and problems, his current situation and the characteristics of his social environment;

- Coordination of the work and cooperation of various bodies, institutions and organizations, in a word, interdepartmental management of the "case".

"Case management" has been accepted in international practice as an effective and economically justified social work intervention method for disadapted clients.

Tools of "case management"

For the protection of children belonging to the risk group, the "Rescue the Children" organization developed the tools for the application of "case management" developed within the framework of the "Community Support Program with Children", covering the ongoing process from the detection of the child belonging to the risk group to the closing of the "case".

At present, there is no clear definition of the meaning of "threat to children's life" or "socially dangerous situation" in the Azerbaijani child protection system. In this regard, it is difficult to objectively measure which child really belongs to the "risk group" or not. The "case management" tools provided by the "Save the Children" organization are

designed based on the requirements of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and modern conclusions in the field of child development and family psychology in order to protect the well-being of children, while trying to reduce the level of subjectivity.

Identifying children at high risk of institutionalization in the community

Currently, there is no single agency in our country that deals with the identification of abused, neglected and exploited children in the community. Despite the fact that the three agencies (Commission for the Protection of Juvenile Affairs and Rights, Municipality, Children's Police) have a mandate to protect children in the community, they do not collect information about those children and families in order to get the child and his family out of a crisis situation and their belongings are not looked at thoroughly (enough). For these reasons, identifying children whose rights have been violated in Azerbaijan is accompanied by difficulties. The first step of the “case management” method begins with the identification of children at risk. For this, information about families and children in a crisis situation is collected from local social support, education, health institutions and directly from the community.

Then the Social Worker visits that family and assesses its functionality, the level of care and satisfaction of their children's needs (health, education, safety, emotional needs).

In order to determine the level of functionality of the family in terms of taking care of children, the “Save the Children” organization has developed a “Child Safety Assessment” tool that prompts the initiation of “case management”. This assessment tool is based on the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. At this time, it is investigated whether the most important needs of the child are met in the environment in which he lives for successful development.

- Violence, exploitation, neglect (right to protection from neglect and abuse);
- The right to grow up in a family environment and live with parents;
- Shelter fee and conditions at home for child development;
- Compulsory education fee, health service usage fee, food (food provision, special care and support of children with limited health);
- The right to full participation in the community, the right to be heard.

“Child safety assessment” serves to identify the children most exposed to the risk of institutionalization within the community and mobilize social services in the community to support this child.

During the evaluation process, the social worker assesses the level of non-fulfilment of the child's important needs from 1 to 5 points. If the total score is above 20, it is an indication of the higher risk of entrepreneurship due to the average psycho-social condition and economic condition of the Azerbaijani family. The score may be different for each community.

As a result of the initial assessment, the score of the family's child protection level above 20 means that the family can not cope with the crisis situation and as a result, the child's rights are severely violated in the family, there are threats that can seriously harm the child's successful development.

Tools used in the psycho-social assessment of the family:

- Initial assessment;
- Detailed assessment;
- “Genogram”;
- “Sociogram”;
- “Service plan” drawing up;

- Description of family support operational planning meeting;
- The structure of the family support operational planning meeting;
- Monitoring and evaluation are considered.

The main goal of the case management approach is to create coordination between the services provided. Case management is a systematic problem-solving process consisting of a series of interrelated tasks aimed at providing a variety of services to a person who has sought help. It is the process by which the social worker evaluates and plans the needs and problems of the client in order to achieve the desired effective result during the work with the client.

Case management consists of the following stages:

1. Do not communicate with the client. Determine how well the program fits the client. Involvement of the client in the program.
2. Assessment - determination of the client's capabilities and needs. Assessment means the collection of information related to all issues reflecting the applicant's condition (personal information, food ration, place of residence, education, health, psychological state, etc.). The assessment should be sufficiently comprehensive and complete for the correct preparation of the work plan. The assessment process also helps the social worker to identify the applicant's existing strengths and potential.
3. Determination of goals and drawing up a work plan - In order to achieve the goal, a plan should be prepared together with the client, at this time, the client's emerging needs should be taken into account after the assessment. The plan should consist of objective and specific goals and should be updated from time to time if necessary.
4. Intervention, i.e. carrying out the work plan – Determine what kind of services and help are needed. Direct the client to where he can get such service and help.
5. Re-evaluate and monitoring - Check how well the plan is working and whether it is delivering the expected results.
6. Conclusion – Closing the case after reaching the desired result of meeting the needs identified during the assessment

Case management has several goals:

- Improve clients' development, problem-solving and coping skills;
- To create and promote the beneficial and humane work of systems that provide people with resources and services;
- Connecting people to systems that provide resources, services and opportunities
- Increase the volume and capabilities of the service system
- To participate in the development and improvement of social policy.

Thus, the task of the case manager is to accompany the client's problem from the beginning to the end and provide the most effective social services at this time.

2. Conclusion

Case management is understood as a method that includes assessment of the needs of a person in difficult life conditions, provision of services to eliminate these needs, coordination of social work, organization of monitoring of services, evaluation and completion of the social service process.

- To achieve the application of the experience of the countries where case management is widely applied in the field of social services according to the national characteristics of our republic
- To achieve the provision of inter-institutional cooperation and coordination activities on social service

It is very important to establish and establish a referral (interagency referral) system to meet the needs of people in difficult living conditions. A referral system is a process that identifies a problem, decides to have the work done by a more qualified or qualified agency and informs the person who directly reports the problem or needs help. The referral system aims to provide comprehensive, continuous and quality services within the social protection and other sectors. Effective referral mechanisms are particularly necessary to address all forms of violence, as well as cruelty, child neglect and other situations requiring immediate response. The main advantage of the referral system is that it is implemented on the basis of protocols or rules that describe the service-related tasks and obligations of institutions operating in the social service and child protection system, including the coordinated implementation of services. A referral system must be in place to implement a case management process.

It is a process consisting of assessing the needs of a person in difficult living conditions, providing a package of services to address these needs, coordinating social work, organizing/evaluating the monitoring of services and closing the case.

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