

Case Follow-Up: What should this look like?

Case management is a process that takes time, and a once-off interaction with the survivor may not have the desired longer term effect. Follow up enables the case worker to work with the survivor to assess the progress and provide further support and referrals. During the follow up process, the case worker and the survivor together:

- monitor progress of the survivor on the services and referrals received
- re-assess safety and other key needs
- establish if there are barriers to achieving the case action goals
- establish if the survivor has any new needs
- revise the action plan (if needed)

Planning for Follow Up

During the first case management session, the case worker should discuss options for follow up visits. Be very specific on the time and the day that the follow up will take place that is agreeable to both the case worker and the survivor. The language of describing the day of follow up need to be specific, for example, “after one day”; or “the same day and time as today next week”. The case worker and survivor should agree on a time and place for follow up exploring the safest and easiest options for the survivor. This can be in the office or women center of the organization, or other place that guarantees safety e.g. health clinic, other partner organization’s facility if the survivor feels more comfortable. Home visits are not ideal as this can compromise confidentiality and security. See further guidelines on home visits for more information.

The period between follow ups will depend on various factors like the severity of the case, emotional state of the survivor, availability of the case worker and survivor, and other follow up services that the survivor will require, among other factors. In many cases, weekly follow up sessions are appropriate and the regularity can be explored as the survivor progresses in healing. The survivor may also turn up for follow up earlier than scheduled due to prevailing circumstances in her life. The case worker should never turn down a survivor but conduct the follow up sessions when the need is expressed. The case worker can also call the survivor by phone if a phone is readily accessible to them and pre-determined to be safe for them to use.

What does follow up look like?

The follow up is a full case management session where all the principles discussed earlier are applicable in the case worker-survivor relationship. During the follow up session, some level of rapport has already been established between the case worker and the survivor. The case worker should receive the survivor and make them comfortable. The session is used to monitor how the survivor has progressed since the previous session, the healing process, and also to establish progress in accessing different services. The case worker, therefore, facilitates the process to:

- *Reassess safety* - Survivors' risks of harm often increase once they have disclosed the incident. Therefore, case workers should assess a survivor's safety during every visit with a survivor. During follow-up visits, you should ask specific questions about the survivor's safety in their home and community and what has changed since the last meeting. Based on the outcome of the safety reassessment, you should follow up on safety referrals or make an updated safety plan if necessary.
- *Reassess psychosocial state and functioning monitor progress* - use the session to establish the survivor's progress in the healing process and managing her circumstances. The case worker should make observations on changes in the survivor's emotions and appearance from previous sessions. It is possible that the violence has continued, reduced or become worse, or that the survivor may not have disclosed some aspects of their situation and they do so in follow up visits due to improved rapport. Establishing a good trusting relationship allows the survivor to disclose as they feel comfortable while the case worker assess changes that may indicate increased threat.
- *Evaluate progress made towards action/goals agreed on in the Case Action Plan Form* - In follow up sessions, the survivor and case worker go through the case action plan made in the first session and assess the progress made including services accessed if she was referred for some services and any challenges experienced while accessing services. Identify whether any new needs have emerged that should be addressed.
- *Revise the case action plan* - if some circumstances have changed, the follow up visit is used to review and revise the action plan. Document the outcomes of referrals and any new needs that emerged on the case action plan form or a follow-up form. Schedule another follow-up visit.
- *Implement revised case action plan* - If new referrals are required, additional informed consent procedures must be followed in subsequent follow up visits.

Where follow up is not viable

In some humanitarian settings, following up with a survivor may not be possible due to insecurity or the transient nature of the population. If you already know that the context is going to make follow-up very unlikely, be sure that the survivor has the information and/or a plan in place to get the support they need before you end your session.

Key Lessons

Even where follow up is viable, survivors do not necessarily come for follow up. Discuss with the survivor what obstacles—emotional or physical— that could prevent them from being able to make a follow-up appointment. It is easy for survivors to agree to follow-up appointments when they are in the room with you, but once they leave, many issues may arise that will prevent them from returning. Brainstorming with the survivor about what the obstacles may be— transportation, child care, time, safety or feelings such as fear, stigma, shame, worry—and identifying possible solutions to those obstacles, mobilizes the survivor's thinking and problem-solving skills and makes it more likely that they will return. Make sure the survivor is safe and getting the help they need, and identify and overcome barriers or problems.

Following-up may indicate the need for a minor modification or a complete change in the case management plan of care. While the case management process involves steps, you need to recognize that survivor's lives are rarely so straightforward and most often involve a complex mix of ongoing needs. You may have to go through some of the steps several times during your work with a survivor. When cases are very complex, and especially where risks are very high, it is likely that a case will remain open for a long time. This is ok. It is important to remember that it may be very difficult to meet all of a survivor's needs, and that while you can continue to support the person for as long as they want to receive help, you are not expected to find solutions to all of the person's problems.

Quiz Questions¹

1. What should be included in the case follow-up?
 - Check on services she was referred to
 - Check on progress towards goals
 - Check on healing progress
 - Explore needed revisions to the safety plan
 - None of the above
 - All of the above
2. In the follow-up process, since it can be difficult for the survivor to consider all the possible barriers, case workers should identify solutions for the survivor.
 - True
 - False
3. For follow up to be successful, case workers should talk with the perpetrator about ways to change their behavior
 - True
 - False



¹ All of the above, True, False