

Capacity Building For Functional Social Worker Officials Of East Java Province On “The Case Management Approach As A Social Work Intervention Strategy” At The East Java Provincial Human Resources Development Agency

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Abstract:

This Community Service Program was designed to strengthen the capacity of Functional Social Worker Officials of East Java Province in understanding the concepts, principles, and stages of case management based on best practices. By enhancing their knowledge and skills, social services at the regional level are expected to more effectively reach vulnerable groups and improve the quality of community social functioning. In addition to providing theoretical understanding, this program emphasized practical application so that participants would be able to implement case management in their daily work contexts, including crisis situations, multidisciplinary cases, and cases requiring long-term support. Ultimately, the case management approach is not merely a technical instrument, but also a reflection of social workers' professional commitment to delivering high-quality, integrated, and humane services to clients, thereby generating sustainable and positive change

Introduction

The Case Management approach is one of the principal intervention strategies in social work practice, designed to respond to clients' needs that are complex, multidimensional, and layered, and that often involve multiple service systems and cross-sector actors. In the context of social welfare, clients frequently face interrelated problems such as structural poverty, disability, domestic violence, child and older adult neglect, mental health disorders, and limited access to public services. Such complexity requires a service approach that is not only responsive, but also coordinated, continuous, and oriented toward the client's unique needs.

Moxley (1989) defines case management as a service system that functions to organize, coordinate, and sustain networks of both formal and informal support, as well as planned activities aimed at optimizing social functioning and well-being for individuals with diverse needs. This definition underscores that case management is not merely an administrative activity, but a professional process that places the client at the center of intervention and ensures continuity of care.

The National Association of Social Workers (1989) defines social work case management as a professional practice method that enables social workers to assess the needs of clients and families, develop service plans, coordinate resources, monitor and evaluate interventions, and engage in advocacy to ensure that the specific needs of clients with complex problems are met. This definition positions social workers as case managers who

bear full responsibility for the entire intervention process in a systematic and goal-directed manner.

Based on these perspectives, case management can be understood as a structured framework that integrates a range of helping activities at both individual and group levels through clear coordination procedures. The role of the case manager is not limited to linking services, but also includes facilitating change, making professional decisions, and advocating for clients when navigating service systems that are often fragmented.

Field realities indicate that many clients are unable to access services independently due to limited information, personal capacity constraints, bureaucratic barriers, and minimal social support. Burns et al. (2001) emphasize that clients with complex needs particularly those experiencing mental health problems and social vulnerability are at high risk of service failure if they are not supported through intensive and sustained coordination mechanisms. Therefore, case management positions social workers as key actors who ensure service continuity from assessment and intervention planning through service delivery and termination.

In practice, clients' problems often become increasingly complex if not addressed in an integrated manner. Poor interagency connectivity can lead to overlapping interventions, gaps in needed services, and ineffective responses to social problems. Holloway (1991) states that uncoordinated social interventions tend to be partial and less capable of producing sustainable change. In this context, case management plays a critical role in integrating interdisciplinary services, building service networks, and mobilizing community support to create a holistic, client-centered helping approach.

Gambrill (2012) emphasizes that effective case management practice must be grounded in rational, reflective, and evidence-based professional decision-making, so that each intervention step can be ethically and professionally justified. This requires social workers to possess comprehensive assessment competencies, cross-sector coordination skills, advocacy capacity, and a deep understanding of clients' needs dynamics and strengths.

In the Indonesian context, case management is increasingly relevant alongside efforts to reform public and social services, particularly through strengthening the capacity of professional social work human resources at national and local levels. This approach aligns with the need to address expanding forms of social vulnerability that demand standardized, integrated, and sustainability-oriented social work practice aimed at improving the well-being of clients and families.

Methodology

1. Stages of Case Management

The case management approach in this activity was implemented through systematic and continuous stages, starting from the client's entry into the service system to termination. These stages reflect professional social work practice that is client-oriented, supports cross-service coordination, and targets measurable intervention outcomes.

a. Intake Stage

The intake stage is the initial phase of case management and serves as the client's entry point into the service system. At this stage, the case manager or social worker gathers preliminary information regarding the client's condition, background, and urgent needs as perceived by the client. The client is also informed about available services, the scope of services, and the roles and responsibilities of each party throughout the assistance

process. Building an initial working relationship (rapport) is a primary focus because the quality of early engagement influences the client's participation across the entire intervention process. Eligibility determination based on program or agency criteria is also conducted to ensure alignment between client needs and available service capacity.

b. Assessment Stage

The assessment stage aims to define the client's problems comprehensively and holistically. Assessment considers multiple dimensions of the client's life, including personal, family, social, economic, health, and environmental conditions. In this process, social workers not only identify problems but also explore the client's strengths, potential, and available resources. Assessment is conducted with the involvement of family members and the client's social network to obtain a complete picture of the problem dynamics. Accurate assessment also requires cross-professional and cross-disciplinary collaboration, particularly in complex cases such as disability, child welfare, older adults, persons with mental disorders, and other vulnerable groups.

c. Goal Setting

Based on assessment results, the case manager and client jointly formulate intervention goals. Goals are designed as short-term and long-term objectives that are realistic, measurable, and aligned with the client's capacities and conditions. The SMART principle (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound) serves as a guide to ensure goals can be evaluated objectively. Active client involvement in goal setting is essential, as mutually agreed goals enhance the client's commitment to change and strengthen ownership of the intervention plan.

d. Intervention Planning and Resource Identification

Intervention planning translates goals into clear, structured, operational steps. This stage determines problem-solving actions, who will do what, and the sequence of intervention implementation. The case manager identifies relevant resources, both formal and informal, such as referral agencies, public services, community organizations, and family and community support.

Planning is conducted participatorily with full client involvement so that the intervention plan reflects real needs and the client's life context. The plan is flexible and can be adjusted if the client's condition changes.

e. Intervention Implementation

Implementation is the stage in which the agreed plan is carried out. Interventions may be delivered directly by the case manager or other social workers, or through linking mechanisms to various service resources. Forms of intervention include counseling, accompaniment, advocacy, skills training, and facilitation of access to health, education, social assistance, and other services. The linking function is not limited to making referrals; it also includes active accompaniment, detailed information provision, simulation or role-play, and strengthening the client's capacity to access and utilize services sustainably.

f. Monitoring and Re-assessment

Monitoring is conducted periodically to review the client's progress and the effectiveness of ongoing interventions. At this stage, the case manager conducts re-assessment of the client's condition and modifies the intervention plan when barriers or changes in needs are identified. The use of consistent measurement tools between baseline and current conditions is applied to maintain objectivity and comparability.

g. Outcome Evaluation

Outcome evaluation assesses the extent to which intervention goals have been achieved. Evaluation is conducted by comparing the client's baseline condition with the condition after intervention implementation. The evaluation results are used to determine the effectiveness of case management and serve as professional reflection material for social workers and service agencies.

h. Termination

Termination is the planned ending of the service relationship when intervention goals have been achieved or when services are no longer needed. Termination is carried out ethically and intentionally, providing feedback to the client regarding achievements. If necessary, the case manager prepares a continuity plan or further referrals so the client continues to receive appropriate support after services end.

2. Community Service Approach and Stages

This community service program was implemented through practice-based training and mentoring. The stages began with a pre-test for all participants to measure initial understanding of case management concepts and stages. Training was then delivered through multiple learning methods, including lectures, Q&A, group discussions, simulations or role-plays, hands-on practice, and field mentoring.

After completing the full training and practice sequence, the program concluded with a post-test and joint reflection. Results indicated that participants improved their understanding of:

1. case management concepts (definitions, scope, history, and objectives);
2. case management stages;
3. case management models; and
4. skills required to serve as a case manager.

In addition, participants were able to practice the full sequence of case management stages directly within the context of client services.

3. Data Collection Techniques

Data collection techniques were tailored to the characteristics of community service activities. Data were collected through pre- and post-tests to measure participants' knowledge gains, observation during training and field practice, group discussions, and participant reflections on applying case management in service practice. These techniques were used to obtain a comprehensive picture of the process and outcomes of the community service program.

4. Location and Time of Implementation

The community service program was conducted at the East Java BPSDM (Human Resource Development Agency), Surabaya City, as the training location, and continued with capacity-building practice at the Integrated Center (Sentra Terpadu) Prof. Dr. Suharso, Surakarta City, Central Java. The program took place from June 3 to June 20, 2024. The selection of BPSDM East Java was based on the needs of functional social worker officials in East Java who had not fully mastered case management service strategies and models for implementing helping interventions in their respective work areas. Meanwhile, the Integrated Center Prof. Dr. Suharso was selected as a practice site because it has adequate facilities and handles various service settings such as disability, children, older adults, and persons with mental disorders enabling participants to gain comprehensive practice experience.



5. Program Duration

The community service program was implemented in stages over several months, beginning with coordination and institutional collaboration through a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between BPSDM East Java and the Bandung Polytechnic of Social Welfare (Politeknik Kesejahteraan Sosial Bandung). The duration encompassed preparation and initial assessment, program planning, implementation of training and mentoring, field practice, and outcome evaluation. The staged timeline allowed participants sufficient time to understand the material, practice it directly, and reflect on practical experiences in real service contexts.

6. Initial Conditions Before Intervention

Prior to implementation, functional social worker officials handling issues of People in Need of Social Welfare Services (PPKS) tended to rely on conventional intervention approaches and had not systematically applied case management models or strategies. This condition limited their capacity to address client problems comprehensively and sustainably. In addition, cross-agency and cross-professional coordination in intervention

implementation remained relatively limited, even though such collaboration is a key factor in resolving complex social problems.

7. Expected Outcomes

The expected outcomes of this program were improved knowledge, skills, and professional attitudes among functional social worker officials in applying case management systematically. Participants were expected to understand case management concepts and stages, implement them in service practice, and build effective cross-service coordination to address client problems comprehensively and thoroughly.

8. Method Justification

The selection of practice-based training and mentoring methods was based on the need to strengthen social worker capacity not only theoretically but also applicatively. Case management is an approach that demands practical skills, coordination capability, and professional decision-making. Therefore, a combination of classroom-based training, simulation, and field practice was considered the most appropriate to ensure effective and sustainable transfer of knowledge and skills.

Result and Discussion

a. Result

Implementation of the community service program focused on strengthening the capacity of functional social worker officials through the application of case management as a social work intervention strategy demonstrated significant results across participants' knowledge, skills, and professional attitudes. The case management approach provided a more systematic and integrated framework for participants to understand and address client problems that are complex and multidimensional.

Applying case management directly influenced how participants conceptualized client problems. Participants no longer viewed client issues as partial or separate; instead, they understood them as an interconnected whole involving individual, family, social environment, and surrounding service systems. This understanding became a crucial foundation for designing interventions that are more comprehensive and sustainable. Participants recognized that resolving client problems cannot be achieved through a single service type or a single intervention approach, but requires coordination and integration of relevant resources.

This shift in perspective was also reflected in participants' ability to identify and select the most appropriate case management model based on the nature and complexity of client problems. Prior to the program, most participants tended to apply a uniform approach to diverse cases without considering differences in needs, urgency, or client capacity. After acquiring understanding and practice experience, participants demonstrated improved ability to tailor intervention strategies based on comprehensive assessment results. They were able to determine whether a case required an intensive approach with sustained accompaniment or could be handled through referrals and cross-service coordination. This indicates a shift from conventional approaches toward more strategic, reflective, and client-need-oriented social work practice.

Another positive impact reported by participants was improved capacity for coordination and cross-sector collaboration. Through understanding case management, participants increasingly recognized that social workers cannot work individually when handling complex client problems. They became more open and proactive in

building networks with various agencies and professions such as health services, education, social protection institutions, local government, and community organizations. Such coordination capacity was viewed as a key skill to ensure that clients receive appropriate, timely, and continuous services.

In terms of implementation, innovations developed within the program contributed substantially to its success. The main innovation was the integrative application of case management bridging theory and practice. Client problems were explored using the full case management stages systematically from intake, assessment, goal setting, intervention planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, to termination. Through this framework, participants not only learned what to do, but also why and how each stage is interconnected within the helping process.

The learning approach differed from conventional training that typically emphasizes lecture-based, one-way knowledge transfer. Here, case management theory was combined with simulation, role-play, case discussions, and field mentoring. This enabled participants to learn actively and reflectively, linking training content to everyday work experiences. Participants not only understood case management cognitively, but also developed practical skills required for the case manager role, including assessment skills, professional communication, cross-service coordination, and client advocacy.

Another innovation that participants strongly valued was implementing case management practice with real clients. Practice with real cases provided direct experience of field-level social complexity, the dynamics of social worker client relationships, and the challenges of coordinating multiple stakeholders. Through this experience, participants gained a more realistic understanding of applying case management in daily social service contexts and increased their confidence in fulfilling professional roles.

The program's success was supported by several key enabling factors. One notable factor was the relevance of case management content to participants' job responsibilities as functional social worker officials. Since participants face client cases daily, the material was perceived as highly contextual and applicable. This relevance encouraged enthusiastic and committed participation throughout all program stages.

Another supporting factor was the practice-oriented learning method. This approach facilitated participants' understanding and integration of new knowledge with their existing work experience. Participants were not passive recipients; they were actively engaged through discussions, simulations, and field practice. Such active engagement contributed to deeper mastery of case management concepts and skills. Case management is currently receiving significant attention as an intervention strategy nationally and internationally. Various institutions, including NGOs and international agencies, regard case management as effective for addressing complex and multidimensional social problems. This context further increased participants' interest and motivation to learn and master case management as it aligns with contemporary social work practice developments.

However, implementing case management also involved constraints and challenges. The main challenge was the high number of clients handled in participants' workplaces. In many settings, caseloads exceeded the ideal ratio one social worker handling a maximum of eight clients. This condition may hinder optimal case management implementation, particularly for intensive accompaniment and sustained monitoring.

High workloads also affected participants' ability to set priorities. Participants faced dilemmas in deciding

which clients to address first, while many clients had equally urgent needs. Limited time and resources also influenced the quality of cross-service coordination, a key element in case management.

Several important lessons emerged from this program. One key lesson is the importance of a client centered approach in priority setting. Through comprehensive assessment, social workers can identify levels of urgency and risk, enabling more targeted responses. This helps social workers manage limited resources without neglecting clients with the most urgent needs.

Another important lesson is the need to strengthen networks and collaboration with stakeholders. Strong networks with agencies and other professions can help address resource limitations. Through cross-sector coordination, workload can be shared, and clients can receive more complete and integrated services. Such collaboration also reinforces the social worker's strategic role as service coordinator within the social service system.

Sustainability of this program is reflected in participants' readiness and ability to continue practicing case management in daily duties. Participants not only understood case management stages conceptually, but also gained practice experience enabling independent application. They also learned to select case management models appropriate to client situations, allowing flexible and adaptive practice.

Case management is expected not to remain merely a training outcome, but to become internalized within the social service system at participants' work units. Thus, it can become part of social workers' work culture for addressing client problems comprehensively and sustainably.

From a replication and dissemination perspective, case management has strong potential for broader development across regions and institutions. Increasing client complexity demands intervention strategies that bridge sectors and services. To date, social problem responses have often been sectoral and focused on specific aspects, resulting in suboptimal and unsustained outcomes.

Case management offers a multisectoral and collaborative intervention strategy involving relevant actors according to client needs. This enables more comprehensive and thorough problem resolution. Functional social workers directly involved with clients would benefit from adopting this approach because it provides a clear framework for coordinating services and resources. Considering results, lessons learned, and sustainability potential, case management is highly suitable for replication and wider dissemination as a primary strategy in social work intervention—especially for complex and multidimensional social problems.

b. Discussion

This discussion focuses on an in-depth analysis of the linkages among the community service objectives, output indicators, and outcomes generated through the application of case management as a social work intervention strategy. In this program, case management is not positioned merely as a set of techniques or procedures, but as a professional framework shaping participants' ways of thinking, acting, and collaborating in responding to the complexity of client problems encountered in the field.

One key output targeted in this program was increased participant knowledge and understanding of case management concepts, principles, stages, and models. The results indicate that this output was achieved significantly. Participants were not only able to restate definitions and scope, but also demonstrated the ability to connect these concepts to their existing social work practice experiences. This is critical because conceptual

knowledge improvement forms the foundation for professional practice change. Without strong conceptual grounding, field implementation risks being reduced to routine administrative tasks.

This finding aligns with Gambrill's (2020) view that social work learning is effective when theoretical knowledge is integrated with real practice contexts. In this program, learning extended beyond content delivery to reflection on participants' past and current practice. This integration fostered reflective practice, enabling social workers to reassess prior approaches, identify limitations, and formulate more rational, client-need-based strategies.

Such conceptual improvement became a foundation for practice change. Prior to the program, interventions tended to be conventional, sectoral, and not systematically coordinated. Client problem handling often focused on a single aspect (e.g., social assistance or rehabilitation) without considering linkages to family support, environmental conditions, and cross-sector service access. After training and practice, participants demonstrated improved capacity to map client problems comprehensively. They increasingly viewed clients as individuals embedded within complex social systems, requiring interventions designed with multiple interacting factors in mind.

This shift indicates that outputs did not stop at knowledge transfer but progressed into internalization within participants' professional cognitive frameworks. Such internalization is a prerequisite for sustained outcomes, as long-term practice change occurs only when social workers truly understand and value the approach.

Intermediate outcomes were reflected in participants' improved skills in applying case management stages fully and sequentially. Participants no longer saw intake, assessment, goal setting, planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and termination as separate administrative steps. Instead, they understood them as an interconnected professional workflow determining intervention quality. This is important because a common weakness in field social work practice is broken intervention sequencing—for example, assessment not followed by clear planning, or interventions implemented without systematic monitoring and evaluation.

This finding aligns with Roberts and Ottens' (2022) emphasis that case management effectiveness depends on consistent application of stages grounded in holistic assessment, especially for clients with complex needs. In this program, real-case practice was a key factor strengthening participants' skills. Through practice, participants learned that each stage has direct implications for the next; neglecting one stage can undermine the entire intervention.

Another intermediate outcome was participants' ability to select and adapt case management models based on client problem characteristics. Participants no longer used a single approach for all cases, but differentiated strategies based on urgency, risk, and resource availability. This adaptive capacity reflects increased professional competence, indicating social workers are not acting mechanically but applying well-considered professional judgment.

A key outcome of this program was strengthened participant capacity for cross-sector and cross-profession coordination. Conceptually, case management positions social workers as service coordinators integrating multiple service systems. Results show participants increasingly recognized the importance of building

networks with health, education, social protection agencies, local governments, and community organizations. This awareness is essential because client problems often exceed the capacity of a single institution or profession.

This perspective aligns with Moxley (2020), who emphasizes that the essence of case management lies in its coordinating and integrating functions within social service systems. In this program, strengthened coordination capacity indicates outcomes that are not only individual but also systemic. Improved coordination increases the potential for social workers to become key actors in building more integrated and responsive service systems.

Strengthened coordination also has direct implications for handling clients amid limited resources and high workloads. With stronger networks, social workers do not need to address all problem aspects individually. Instead, they can distribute roles and responsibilities according to each institution's or profession's competence. Thus, program outcomes contribute to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the broader social service system.

From an implementation-method standpoint, practice centered training strengthened both outputs and outcomes. Simulations, role-plays, case discussions, and real-client practice enabled participants to experience case management dynamics directly, including field constraints and challenges. Through these experiences, participants gained technical skills and developed professional sensitivity in responding to real-world situations that are often less than ideal.

Franklin et al. (2020) argue that practice-based learning in social work has a stronger impact on professional behavior change than purely theoretical learning; this was reflected in this program. Participants showed increased confidence and readiness to apply case management in their workplaces an important indicator of achieved outcomes.

This discussion also identifies challenges potentially affecting long-term sustainability. The primary challenge is the high client to social worker ratio in the field. Excessive workloads can reduce the intensity of accompaniment, monitoring, and evaluation key elements of case management. If not well managed, case management may be applied only to a small subset of clients or implemented sub optimally.

Shulman (2020) emphasizes that social work intervention effectiveness is strongly influenced by organizational context, institutional support, and proportional workload distribution. Therefore, sustaining program outcomes requires internal organizational policies, strengthened referral systems, and more realistic workload arrangements so case management can be applied consistently and sustainably.

From a sustainability perspective, this program demonstrates positive potential for long-term outcomes. Participants gained not only knowledge and skills but also professional awareness to adopt case management as a core approach in addressing complex client problems. This awareness is critical for internalizing case management into daily practice and work-unit service systems.

Regarding replication and dissemination, case management remains highly relevant for broader development across regions and institutions. Increasing client complexity calls for multisectoral, collaborative intervention strategies. Sectoral problem handling often produces incomplete and unsustained interventions; case management offers a framework for integrating services and resolving client problems more comprehensively.

Considering achieved outputs, outcomes, challenges, and sustainability/replication potential, this discussion affirms that the community service program not only met its planned indicators but also contributed strategically to strengthening social work practice. This contribution is felt not only at the individual practitioner level but also holds potential to strengthen social service systems more broadly and sustainably.

Conclusion

The community service program focused on strengthening the capacity of functional social worker officials through the application of case management as a social work intervention strategy produced positive and significant results. The case management approach proved relevant and effective in improving participants' understanding, skills, and professional attitudes in addressing client problems that are complex and multidimensional.

Applying case management strengthened participants' perspectives toward viewing client problems more comprehensively and holistically. Participants no longer perceived client issues as partial or sectoral, but as interconnected conditions involving individual, family, social environment, and interacting service systems. This shift became a key foundation for social work practice that is more planned, coordinated, and oriented toward clients' real needs.

In terms of outputs, the program successfully increased participants' knowledge and understanding of case management concepts, principles, stages, and models. Participants were able to connect theoretical understanding with their everyday social work practice contexts. These outputs were not only cognitive in nature but also supported internalization of case management concepts within participants' professional thinking.

In terms of outcomes, the program improved participants' skills in applying case management stages systematically and sequentially, from intake through termination. Participants demonstrated the ability to formulate realistic intervention goals, develop needs-based intervention plans, and conduct monitoring and outcome evaluation more effectively. Participants also developed the capacity to select and adapt case management models according to the characteristics and complexity levels of client problems.

Another important outcome was strengthened capacity for cross-sector and cross-profession coordination and collaboration. Participants increasingly recognized that client problem resolution cannot be accomplished individually by social workers, but requires collaboration with relevant parties. This coordinating capacity reinforced social workers' roles as case managers and service coordinators within the social service system.

The program also identified implementation challenges, particularly related to high workloads and large client caseloads. These challenges may affect the sustainability of case management implementation if not balanced with institutional support and strengthened referral systems. Therefore, long-term success requires organizational commitment and supportive policies at the agency level.

In conclusion, this community service program successfully achieved its planned objectives, both in strengthening participants' individual capacities and in reinforcing more systematic and collaborative social work practice. The case management approach demonstrates strong potential for sustainable implementation, replication, and dissemination as a primary strategy for addressing complex social problems, thereby contributing to improved social service quality and more comprehensive client well-being.

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