Newfoundland & Labrador
College of Social Workers

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Documentation Matters: Tip #18

Social Work Documentation – Mitigating Risk:

Social workers have a duty to maintain professional documentation in accordance with the principles of the CASW Code of Ethics (2024), and the NLCSW Standards of Practice (2024). Social work documentation is an essential component of social work practice and can assist in risk mitigation. Social workers are to consider the following:

- A social workers' credibility can be greatly influenced by the state of their documentation.
- Documenting service provision is evidence it occurred.
- Acknowledge errors in documentation, do not attempt to cover up.
- Documentation can assist in protection of privacy for clients.
- Documentation is key to the delivery of high-quality services.
- Incomplete or non-existent records may lead to ineffective planning, service provision and potential poor outcomes for clients.
- The content of documentation, the language and terminology used, the credibility of and overall access to records combine to impact risk management.
- Too much, too little or the wrong content in social work records can harm clients and create risk for social workers.
- Inadequate documentation exposes the client, social worker, and organization to risk.
- Document knowing there is always an audience.
- Jot notes are not official client records.
- Follow legislative requirements and organizational policies related to social work documentation.

For more information related to social work documentation, visit the NLCSW website www.nlcsw.ca.