Case Note Guidance
Considerations when writing case notes:

1. Timing of case notes. Case notes should be written as soon as possible after the contact occurs.

2. Consistency and content of case notes.
   - What kind of contact is this? (meeting, phone call, letter, etc.) What is the purpose of the contact?
   - Where did the contact or meeting take place?
   - Who was the contact with? Did you meet with both parents in a 2 parent family or just one of them? Were any other people or children present?
   - At intake or overview - were the participant’s rights, including data privacy, and responsibilities discussed?
   - What assessments or screenings took place at the contact? If needs were identified in the assessment, what referrals were made? If the screening tool showed a need for professional assessment, what are the next steps?
   - What was accomplished at this contact or meeting? Was an employment plan discussed or progress on an employment plan reviewed?

3. Case notes must be objective in nature. Avoid bias by leaving personal opinions and assumptions out.
   - Do not cut and paste an e-mail from another professional if it isn’t objective.

4. Documentation should be fact based to the greatest extent possible. Facts are observations (what you saw), what you heard, and information that was provided.
Case Note Examples

Example #1:
Situation: Participant came 20 minutes late to job club. In your agency when participants are over 10 minutes late, they don't get credit for attending. When you told the participant you would not be able to count her as attending Job Club, the participant got mad at you, yelled about her child having a doctor appointment and left. You tried to talk to her about good cause, but she left too quickly. You suspect she lied about her reason for being late. This is a pattern with this participant and you as a counselor are frustrated.

Poor case note:
Sherry came to Job Club late as usual. I told her that you can’t be late and get credit for coming. She told me her kid was at the doctor. I think she is lying about this. She got mad at me and stormed off. I will call and talk to her about good cause if this isn’t a lie.

Good case note:
Sherry came to Job Club 20 minutes late. The agency's policy that if you are over 10 minutes late, you can’t get credit for the class was explained to her. In a loud and angry voice she said she was late because she had to bring her child to a doctor's appt. She walked out before good cause could be explained. Verification from the doctor that will help determine if she had good cause will be requested by phone tomorrow morning.

Example #2:
Intake appointment: You are meeting with Jenny Jorgenson. You have never met Jenny before, but know she is the sister of your other participant who is difficult, gets sanctioned a lot for not following through with her employment plan, and you suspect has a meth problem. For these reasons you were not looking forward to meeting Jenny. Jenny has already completed the overview and initial paperwork. You were told that she brought her baby to the overview. She still needs an employment plan and doesn't have her baby with her when she arrives.

Jenny comes to the appt and seems to be really hyper. She talks fast, keeps getting out of her chair, looks at her cell phone, and seems generally distracted. Despite this behavior, she is quite pleasant and cooperative. Although, you are pleasantly surprised that she is nice, you are suspicious. She doesn’t report any barriers besides being nervous about bringing her child to daycare. She reports that during this meeting, her mother is watching the baby and this is the first time she has ever been away from her baby. You write the employment plan to find daycare and start a 35 hour a week job search. When the meeting is over, she leaves quickly.

Bad case note:
Jenny came into the office today so we could develop an employment plan. As we wrote the plan, she said she was worried about leaving her child in daycare. I gave her information for Childcare Resource and Referral to help her find childcare. I don’t know if she has any intention of following the plan, since she doesn’t want to leave her child in daycare. The plan was written to include a full-time job search. At the end of the meeting, Jenny ran out of the office. Jenny was acting so weird and hyper that I question whether she has a meth problem, which runs in the family.

Good case note:
Jenny came into the office today to complete intake and write an employment plan. Jenny does not report any barriers to employment besides lack of childcare. The plan was written to seek and obtain childcare within two weeks and begin a job search for 35 hours a week. Jenny said she is nervous about leaving her child with a daycare provider. Information about Childcare Resource and Referral was provided to help her find childcare. Throughout the meeting, Jenny frequently checked her cell phone. She got up and sat down in the chair several times during our meeting. She answered all intake questions, but responded with rapid speech. Her behaviors were documented on the Observational Checklist.
TANF Regulations and Case Notes
Using case notes to help meet the documentation and verification standards

MFIP Work Activity, Daily Supervision, Documentation and Verification Guide (Appendix E of the Employment Services manual)
- Use this guide first and foremost to meet the TANF Regulations.
- Update your forms and educate partners (GED/ESL/ABE instructors, unpaid work sites, etc.) on the documentation you need to satisfy the requirements.
- When the form is not completed correctly or is missing information, one way to complete documentation or verification is through case notes.

Example of supplementing with a case note.
A participant is in unpaid work experience. The following documentation and verification is required: the name of the worksite, worksite supervisor, the worksite supervisor’s signature and phone number. The activity log has only the worksite listed. The rest of the contact information can be put in a case note. And, a phone call to the supervisor confirming the activity log hours can be put in case notes. This supplementary documentation and verification in case notes in addition to the activity log would meet the TANF regulations as approved in Minnesota’s Work Verification Plan.

Job Search Activity

Daily Supervision - Weekly Check-In
When a participant is in job search, one element of documentation and verification compliance is daily supervision. As reflected in the state’s approved TANF Work Verification Plan, a weekly check-in needs to be documented in order for the case to be correct. Even if you are seeing the participant every week in job club and documenting the meeting, this may not quite be enough. Evidence that you reviewed the week of job search with the participant is required to meet the daily supervision standard.

From the MFIP Work Activity, Daily Supervision, Documentation and Verification Guide:
As part of the weekly check-in meetings, the employment service provider will review the activity log and verify all of the required information that is contained on the activity log. The employment counselor should sign the activity log attesting that the required information is contained on the activity log and the hours have been verified. A case note may also be used to document the participant’s activity log was reviewed and the hours have been verified.

Insufficient weekly check-in – case notes are fine, but not enough information to meet the daily supervision requirements.
Larinda attended Job Club today. Or
Talked to Larinda, authorized a bus pass for job search.

**Good Weekly Check-in Examples** (By the way, if you use the phrase “weekly check-in” to begin the case note, you will get a gold star!!!!):

**In-person, with timesheet**
Weekly Check-in – Reviewed activity log with Larinda. The most promising lead appears to be a receptionist position at Jim’s chiropractic clinic. We’ll follow up next week to see if she got called for an interview. Hours and activities are reasonable.

**In-person, without timesheet**
Weekly Check-in – Larinda talked about her job search for the last week. She completed several applications. She is hopeful she will hear from Jim’s chiropractic clinic. She will turn in activity log in at Job Club on Thursday.

**Over the phone, without timesheet**
Weekly Check-in – Called Larinda. We discussed her job search for the week. She completed several applications. She is hopeful she will hear from Jim’s chiropractic clinic. She dropped the timesheet in the mail this morning.

**Attempted weekly check-in –**
Weekly check-in – Called Larinda to check in on her job search for the week. There was no answer. Left message and asked for a return phone call.

**Verification of a Job Contact**

*From the MFIP Work Activity, Daily Supervision, Documentation and Verification Guide:*

In addition, the employment service provider must verify at least one job contact no less frequently than bi-weekly. Methods for verifying a job contact include (1) asking the employer to verify the job contact, (2) obtaining a copy of a computerized “receipt” for on-line applications, and (3) copies of applications, letters and business cards when questions are asked during a check-in meeting to corroborate the job contact. The employment services provider will sign a statement on the activity log or enter a case note indicating the specific job contact that has been verified when no other documentation is provided.

(1) If you talk to an employer to verify the job contact, document this in case notes.
(2) and (3) No case note is necessary. However, in cases where there is no date on the verification (on-line application, receipt, business card, etc.) that corresponds with a job contact on the activity log, a case note should be used to tie the documentation with the verification or job contact.
Suggested Content Outline for Case Notes

Information about the interview
♦ Note the date of the event (in WF1 the entry date will autofill)
♦ Note what kind of activity it is (ex. “counseling and guidance” or “job search” can be found in the subject drop-down box on WF1)
♦ Note what kind of contact or meeting it is (ex. “phone” or “in person” can be found in the subject drop-down box on WF1)
♦ If this is a meeting, note where the meeting is taking place. For example if this was a home visit, note this in the body of the case note.

Body of the case note
♦ Document the purpose of your contact: intake interview, creating/revising the employment plan, discussion of strengths, issues and barriers, discussion of an education plan, assisting with writing a resume, setting up an appointment, discussion of a sanction, etc.
♦ Document important parts of the discussion: goals; timelines that were established for these goals; and concerns of the participant.

Content of employment overview and initial interview
The first appointment with a participant is very important because it establishes and educates the person of their rights and responsibilities.

Document in case notes information that is not already documented elsewhere. For example, the Rights and Responsibilities form is signed by the participant, so it is not necessary to case note that this form was reviewed.

You may also be interested in other factor such as names, ages of children and names of any other household members if not documented elsewhere.

Note: it is not necessary to document information in case notes if it has already been documented in another way. This means that it is not necessary to document in case notes the contents of a Notice of Intent to Sanction (NOITS) and when it was sent. However, you may find it helpful to have this information in case notes to “fill in the story” of what is happening with a case. If you do choose to case note that you sent a NOITS, it is sufficient to reference the document without repeating everything in it. For example:

1. Subject: Non-compliance  
   Contact: Letter  
   Details: A NOITS was sent to Paula on March 15, 2009, for not complying with her employment plan, specifically, failure to attend workshops and turn in timesheets each week (see file copy).

2. Subject: Non-compliance  
   Contact: Letter  
   Details: NOITS sent March 15, 2009.*

*A copy of the NOITS that is in the case file, should contain the dates and what is necessary to lift the sanction.