Hi All,
Stearns County is looking at case banking. We’d like to get your opinion if your county is currently case banking. We are looking for “the good, the bad, the ugly”. We’ve been encouraged to gather this information from actual workers vs. supervisors or management.

Here are some of the things we’d like to know:

1) How long have you been case banking?
2) Do you have electronic files or hard/paper files? If paper – where do you store the cases? In one location vs. some in each worker’s office?
3) Do you have all cases together in one bank or do you have separate banks by population (adult vs. family) or by program (MFIP, FS, HC...)?
4) How many workers does your county have?
5) How many cases (rough ballpark figure) are case banked in your county?
6) If you called the shots and it was YOUR choice, would you continue with case banking?
7) If you like it, why? If you don’t like it, why not?
8) How long did it take to get set up and work through the rough spots/transition?
9) How do your clients like case banking?
10) Do you feel more or less stressed due to case banking?
11) Any suggestions?

Please email me within the next week or so. Thanks for helping us with this big decision!

Kathy Dukowitz
Stearns County
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320-656-6064
Here is my response to Case banking questions - from Dodge County.

1.) Case banking started in November of 2010.
2.) We currently have paper files. We currently have 2 case banks and the files for each team are stored in one office in 2 workers offices that are central location for the teams.
3.) We have our cases separated into 2 teams Family (Healthcare, Family Cash, Food Support and Childcare Assistance) and Adults without children including LTC. We have our 3 roles which are Phone Person, Interviewer and Processor. The Family Team which I am on has two processors since we have 4 people in our group. The Family Team has a created a Procedures/ Duties Document that has each role listed and the duties for that role. We found this to helpful so that each member knew what was expected of them while they were in a particular role each week.
4.) Dodge County has 7 financial workers. The family Team has 4 workers and the Adult Team has 3.
5.) 1560 cases are being Case banked between both teams
6.) Yes we would continue to Case bank if we were given the option to stop or continue on case banking. It is nice to work in the different roles and focus just on that role versus trying to manage all the roles with a single caseload. Our case bank has decided we would rotate roles each week. We have developed a document with each role and the duties and expectations within the role.
7.) I do like the Case banking process. I like that you are able to focus on one role each week and the variety of switching roles each week. It has standardized our processes which is good for the clients. Before each worker had their own way of processing their work and now all team members process cases a like. I also like knowing that we are all working as a Team to get the work done and it does not just fall on one person getting there caseload processed each month.
8.) I would say that it took about 3 months for us to get to a point where the Case banks were working seamlessly. We started out on the fly as we had 3 workers who were interested in case banking and work through issues as they came up. Each case bank has a morning touch base to talk about any issues and what the focus should be that day. We also had a white board for the first few months were team members could write down questions or areas that needed to be addressed for the roles. We still meet for a few minutes each morning to see where we are at for work load and if we need to change focus then we make adjustments. It was a huge change at first in the way we process our daily work and we did have a back log for the first 2 months and team members were frustrated and thought what have we done but now could not imagine going back to individual case loads.
9.) At first the clients were not happy that we went to case banking. Clients would call the front desk and ask for their old worker and were told they had to talk to the Phone person. We had to reassure the clients that all the Team members on their case have the same knowledge and can answer their questions. We also explained the reason we were changing to case banking was to increase efficiency and customer service.
10.) I feel less stressed with this model. I think the reason for this is not that the work load has decreased but that I know I am part of a team and as long as each person does there part the work is completed and clients are getting the benefits they are requesting.
11.) My suggestion would be to make sure you have good communication and realize there will be some stress at the beginning with a new process but the end result will be good.

If you have any questions about Case banking in the future let me know.

Jeremy Allen
Financial Assistance Specialist
Dodge County Human Services
1) How long have you been case banking?

Steele County started April 1st.

2) Do you have electronic files or hard/paper files? If paper – where do you store the cases? In one location vs. some in each worker’s office?

Paper for currently active cases, imaged files for closed. We were lucky enough to already be in cubes so all files for the bank are housed within the cube.

3) Do you have all cases together in one bank or do you have separate banks by population (adult vs. family) or by program (MFIP, FS, HC...)?

Family bank does not do family cash or CCAP, foster care or adoption assistance
Adult bank does not do LTC/EW or GRH/Waiver under 65

4) How many workers does your county have?

When we are full staffed..............
Family bank has 4 staff – 1 dedicated intake worker, 1 dedicated phone worker & 2 dedicated processing workers. (One of processing workers also has 17 foster care cases)
Adult bank has 3 staff – 1 dedicated intake worker, 1 dedicated phone worker & 1 dedicated processing worker.
2 Family cash & CCAP workers broken down by alphabet (housed on a different floor with E&S staff so bank intake workers do interviews when families initially apply for cash but then forward to them.
1 LTC/EW over 65 worker & 1 GRH/Waiver under 65 - These two have a few assigned duties to assist the bank including working new hire hits, IEVS, discrepancy reports, etc...I’m very lucky they are also willing to help out in other areas when necessary, which has been on a daily basis with being down 2 family workers right now.
1 Case aide/clerical – filing, setting up files & mailing larger envelopes, housing verifications, cost effective reimbursements to clients and also enters info for CCAP – doesn’t do any approvals, however.
1 Supervisor – I have all adoption assistance cases and also conflict of interest cases.

5) How many cases (rough ballpark figure) are case banked in your county?

Family bank – 1,046 active cases with 33 pending
Adult bank - 980 active cases with 33 pending

6) If you called the shots and it was YOUR choice, would you continue with case banking?

Absolutely...it’s not without its glitches, but it’s the only way to go.

7) If you like it, why? If you don’t like it, why not?

People are in positions that go with their strengths. I have an awesome processing worker, who has difficulty wording things delicately so always received calls that she was rude and should not be a worker. Also the opposite—one that is very good with clients (has had advocacy training & is attending night school for SW) but not so hot in processing...she feels sorry for clients and tends not to follow policy, as long as it benefits the client.

I also like the fact that clients are receiving consistency throughout...whether in person, by phone or in processing. We also catch errors that other workers are making as several people are touching the cases.
8) How long did it take to get set up and work through the rough spots/transition?

Tracy had told us not to make any major changes for 3-6 months. We went to visit a couple of counties on Valentines and started moving forward with how to set up our system. Our transition went fairly smoothly...family’s had quite a back-log of work to be cleaned up but everyone pitched in and it went really well. We continue to tweek things along the way.

9) How do your clients like case banking?

Definitely depends on the client. Some like it and some don’t. The elderly have more of an issue with it, which was why one of my adult workers was my biggest opponent to implementing. How I explained it was that yes, the older population would prefer the old way of having only one person who knows everything about their case and they feel comfortable with....but that is not the population who is currently creating the huge increase in our caseload size. It’s the Generation X population who doesn’t care who they are dealing with, they just want their calls returned promptly and want prompt and appropriate action on their case, not the personal relationship with their worker, which we don’t have time for anymore anyway. (By the way, the adult worker who dug her heels in the sand to begin with now loves it and does not want to go back to the old system.

10) Do you feel more or less stressed due to case banking?

Sometimes more and sometimes less—it changes a lot of things for the supervisor as well. I’m dealing with far less calls from clients complaining because their worker never returns their calls, in fact I’ve only gotten one regarding a banked case and was able to pull the phone records to find that they had only left one message 2 hours before calling me to complain. Everyone needs to be on the same page as far as how the case banking system works...especially the working on case in the order paperwork is received.

And you never lose the constant personnel issues and this helps in some ways and also hurts in some ways.

11) Any suggestions?

*Look at various counties, including different sizes. Some things work for one county but may not work for another...even of a similar size.

*Let your workers be part of the set-up process.

*Try to keep it as simple as possible, but know that you will need to tweek things as you go and don’t make any major changes unless you still have total chaos after 3 months or so. (Some counties have further breakdowns than we do...change and recert workers. We’re heard and have dealt with cases that things seem to fall through the cracks because of the back and forth aspect.

*Let workers talk one-on-one with workers who are case banking so they hear directly from the “horses-mouth” rather than from management.

Good luck and let us know if you have further questions.
Cottonwood County has been doing case banking since April 2011. We have paper files. Our files are stored at our agency in a large basement room in files. Our cases are split. They consist of a families unit and an elderly disabled unit. Our families unit also does MNCARE and childcare. Our families unit has 647 in MAXIS cases, 150 MNCARE cases and around 40 child care cases. Our elderly and disabled have 494 cases. Our families unit consists of 4 workers and our elderly and disabled consist of 2 workers. If we called the shots I know the families workers would keep it and I'm thinking the elderly and disabled would keep it to. The families unit likes it because things seem to run more efficiently and smoothly. When we first started it took us a good month to get used to it. We did tweek things once we started it. We do have a few clients that don't like it but for the most part the clients don't say too much about it. I personally feel less stressed as when you're gone, you don't come back to a pile of work. Kari
See highlighted responses

1) How long have you been case banking? Family team started May 1st, Elderly team started May 15th and Adult team started Aug 1st.

2) Do you have electronic files or hard/paper files? If paper – where do you store the cases? In one location vs. some in each worker’s office? We do not have an electronic system at this time so paper is organized in two file cabinets for Family team, Elderly is using a rolling file cart and Adults have a rolling two drawer file cabinet along with a portable crate with files. We do have central filing where the case files are kept and workers request files as they need them which is the same way it was done prior to case banking for us.

3) Do you have all cases together in one bank or do you have separate banks by population (adult vs. family) or by program (MFIP, FS, HC...)? Family team does MFIP,DWP, CCAP, FS and MA for clients with children in the home, Elderly team does LTC, cases with waivers and over 65 FS/MSA and some DX MA if HC is the only open program and Adult team do clients without children in the home, under 65 FS/MSA/HC without waivers. MCRE is handled by two workers in Adult team and one in the Elderly team

4) How many workers does your county have? 10 workers total, 5 in Family team, 2 in Elderly team and 3 in the Adult team

5) How many cases (rough ballpark figure) are case banked in your county?
   - Family - 789
   - Elderly - 854
   - Adult - 510

6) If you called the shots and it was YOUR choice, would you continue with case banking? All workers have expressed they wouldn’t go back to single case loads, even the workers that were against case banking at the start.

7) If you like it, why? If you don’t like it, why not? See emails below workers shared with another county:

   I am the perfect example of a worker digging in her heels. Just ask Wendy. I carried a case load of 380 prior to case banking and dug in my heel and put up a brick wall as I called it. I felt I would lose the communication skills with the providers I work closely with, lose the trust and confidence my client had in me and I didn’t want to be working on an assembly line. I do have to admit it was just the fear of the unknown. Turned out to be totally different than what I was thinking.

   Case Banking is the best thing ever, I would hate to go back. I use to have those piles of work I just couldn’t find time for but with the filing system and the work routine’s we have set up I don’t have those piles anymore. I also don’t feel the stress as much as before. If I’m struggling with a case I know I have a partner to work thru the issue and that they are more than willing to help because it is their case also and they need to be involved in the difficult ones. I am fortunate to work in a case bank unit that has only 2 workers. We work very well together with communication and have a routine set up that works just great with two of us. For 4 days one worker is on intake, taking all calls, walk-ins, conducting interviews if necessary, taking review appts, monitoring outlook, SIR emails and so forth. I often call it “putting out fires”. We are available for internal contact with the agency workers also. The other worker processes as much paperwork as they can in those 4 days. It’s nice the fact that you can concentrate so closely on a file and know you will not have interruptions as before. It seems like we have so much more control over the caseload as before. Hope this helps. Sandy Kain, Financial Worker, Human Services of Faribault & Martin Counties

   I am part of a 2-person elderly/disabled case banking unit. We started case banking the week of May 15. I am “new” to LTC and elderly cases and was previously working with singles and adults. So not only am I learning a whole new workload, but also learning the case banking process. While I was training for this position, the previous LTC financial worker had been ill on and off for the previous 4 or 5 months and wasn’t able to keep up on her cases. So, when we started case banking, some applications were well over due.
1. I was amazed at how quickly we were able to catch up on the overdue applications because of the case banking. I believe we had all applications caught up within 2-3 weeks and have been able to process applications timely since.

The positives of case banking that I have seen:

1. Clients are almost always able to contact a FW right away, or else receive an immediate call back due to having one of us always available for phones. These calls are taken care of right away and this has resulted in fewer calls from clients when previously we were unable to return calls right away. Clients seem to be happier with this immediate response.

2. Applications are processed timely due to having one of us always on processing while the other is on phones and appointments. The “processor” is able to concentrate on the work and not have the interruptions that would previously have caused delays in processing.

3. We have been communicating well with each other to discuss problems, uncertain program policies, changes, etc. in order to provide consistent and accurate results for our clients.

4. An extra set of eyes looking at cases has provided more accurate approvals and changes to cases. These are usually found during reviews, or when changes are reported, or completing a pending application that someone else has started.

5. There doesn’t seem to ever be that pile of paperwork that you will get to someday, or when you can focus better, etc. That is always included in the daily work and gets completed timely.

6. The structure and organization of the case banking seems to have improved processing time for all paperwork received from applications to verifications received to changes reported.

7. Now we get to share the difficult cases and clients which reduces stress in our day to day production.

8. By working together, we have learned to compromise on how to affectively complete our assigned tasks and duties to gain a stronger sense of organization and control over our workload.

9. When returning from time off, there isn’t a pile up of applications, paperwork and phone calls to return, this has already been taken care of while absent. This helps to enjoy the time away or not feel so guilty at having to take time off.

10. Our communication with each other has improved greatly and I feel that the workload is shared with my fellow worker instead of feeling like the only one that can take care of certain things. This has been a great stress reliever.

11. As a “new” worker to Elderly/LTC unit, case banking has helped me convert easier due to not bringing in old ways that don’t exist. I was able to learn from my fellow co-worker using their direction and guidance to help me learn my “new” position.

There really isn’t much that is negative, but can give some examples of what some thoughts were and the results...

1. Financial workers not wanting to give up control of their cases. Although it seemed we had to “pry fingers” from certain cases, once they had let go, they discovered that other financial workers were able to handle these cases/clients and are able to give the same quality of care.

2. Clients not wanting to talk with anyone else. Bottom line is that the clients want their benefits and it really doesn’t matter who they end up talking to. Some clients may need to be persuaded more than others, but a simple explanation usually made them understand, especially if you say something like, “you’re so lucky, you now have 2 financial workers working for you”.

3. Financial workers thought case banking would be like an assembly line. Once case banking had started, they had realized this is not the case. We still give the quality of care we always had, but I feel that it is more organized and unified in our decisions and conversations.

4. Not knowing where the other worker had left off on a case because that worker has it all in his/her head. Case noting and TIKLing has improved drastically -- when a client calls or when you pick up a pending application, you need to know right where the other has left off. You don’t want to waste time going through the case again. Unified case notes and TIKLs are key in great case banking. Once this had been implemented, it was amazing how fast things were able to get accomplished. We also feel confident if QC gets ahold of these cases.

5. Worrying about other workers finding mistakes and pointing fingers. We work as a team and when mistakes arise, we talk about it as a team, without pointing fingers, to make sure we are all on the same page. Of course, people interpret policy in different ways. Once we discuss this, then we can come up with a unified answer. If we cannot, then we may need to request policy clarification from supervisors or health or policy quest.

All in all, change is scary. We had numerous meetings, discussions and requests to other counties for instructions on how they process and maintain cases. We had tweaked them to fit our needs and eventually jumped in and we
continue to make changes as we go. I feel that after doing case banking for only a couple of months, I cannot see that we would ever go back to single caseloads. DeeAnn Ellanson, Financial Worker Elderly/Disabled Unit, Human Services of Faribault & Martin Counties

I don’t really think anyone in the Family case bank was super overwhelmed going into case banking. We all processed our applications in the allotted time lines and I think our clients always got served very timely. I guess what appealed to me prior to going into case banking was being able to work to my strengths and to know that if there was an area that I maybe wasn’t as strong in (day care assistance) that I had others who could jump in and help. While we always did this before too, this system seems more supportive to each other.

As far as the rest of the Agency goes, while we come up with our protocols it might be a bit confusing to them, but I would have to say they get answers to their questions much quicker now. Since it is one person’s responsibility now and other things are not getting in the way, their questions/requests can be handled almost immediately. As far as clients go, at first some of them were apprehensive, as they were attached to their worker. But as they see how quickly things get done, and that they ALWAYS have someone to talk to even the ones who didn’t care for it at first are coming around and see the benefits.

I think the idea of changing to case banking made me nervous, but always appealed to me at the same time. The biggest benefit that I see is that your co-workers, even if they were great before, are true team mates now. What one does affects the group, so we are invested in helping each other with difficult cases, clients, etc. In Martin County, the family unit is really happy for the change. When you are focusing on one task of our job, you can do it and do it well, knowing that something else isn’t being forgotten or left behind.

I used to have an ick pile - of stuff that wasn’t as important or stuff that I maybe want as excited to deal w/, etc. That pile doesn’t exist anymore, because it is just part of the misc. stuff that gets done daily. I think case banking has been a really positive change for us, for our agency, and for our clients. Nicole Worlds, Financial Worker Family Unit Martin County

More from Lea...

Remember that if something about case banking doesn’t seem to be working that you have other team members that can bring new and fresh ideas to the table to try instead

8) How long did it take to get set up and work through the rough spots/transition? The Family team was first team to go up May 1st and the first 2 weeks were hectic getting used to the new process. We tweeked things almost daily the first two weeks. We weren’t afraid to make adjustments on area’s that weren’t working like we initially thought they would and by June they were feeling comfortable with the process. The more people in the team the more coordination it takes to make the team run smoothly. Elderly with two people can be much more flexible in how they work as only two have to agree.

9) How do your clients like case banking? The best way to explain it was a client phone call that went like this - client insisted on speaking to their previous worker. FW explained that she no longer had an individual worker but had 5 workers now that could help her. Again the client insisted but finally asked the FW if her case had been processed. It just happened that the FW on the phone with the client had just approved the case for this client. The client was amazed and happy with how her case was handled so fast. I was surprised at how fast clients have adapted to this change. As a supervisor I haven’t taken one call from a client that expressed concern with case banking. Actually I can say that calls to me from clients have almost disappeared. I maybe get 1 a week now.

10) Do you feel more or less stressed due to case banking? Workers express that the stress level has decreased as they no longer have all the responsibility on their shoulders but share it with all the team members. Especially like it when they take a day off they don’t come back to a desk buried in paper.

11) Any suggestions? Go for it.
1) How long have you been case banking? We started case banking as of Jan 1st

2) Do you have electronic files or hard/paper files? If paper – where do you store the cases? In one location vs. some in each worker’s office? We have paper files; we do have one central location for all of our files that are in the bank.

3) Do you have all cases together in one bank or do you have separate banks by population (adult vs. family) or by program (MFIP, FS, HC…)? The way we have our cases split is as follows:
   LTC cases are separate, we have 2 LTC workers that have these cases split, and they do their own type of banking system.
   Then we have our cash/ccap cases separate. We have 2 workers that are part of the bank that have all of the cash cases. All of the rest of the cases are in the bank…. family/adult (all programs)

4) How many workers does your county have? We have 6 workers (7 with the supervisor) so we have 2 that do LTC and the other 4 do the bank. We break the functions down as follows:
   1 person is our phone worker who also handles a lot of the misc. dails, ect
   1 person handles renewals
   1 person is on applications who also see the appts for the week
   1 person is on verfs
   We all take turns on "worker for the day" who handles all the EA’s and exp that walk in during the day.
   Otherwise all functions are changed weekly

5) How many cases (rough ballpark figure) are case banked in your county? About 800 plus about 100 cash/ccap that are not in the bank

6) If you called the shots and it was YOUR choice, would you continue with case banking? We seem to have had good luck with the banking system as far as timelines.

7) If you like it, why? If you don’t like it, why not?

8) How long did it take to get set up and work through the rough spots/transition? I would safely say that it took 3-4 months to work through all of the trouble issues, we feel that we have finally just finished "fine tuning" our system.

9) How do your clients like case banking? At first our clients were not happy with the banking system, but just like us, they are getting used to it, and we no longer hear that a client does not like their worker.

10) Do you feel more or less stressed due to case banking? Depends on the amount of renewals that come in each month!

11) Any suggestions? Stick with it, and do what works for your county size and workers!