



Annual Disability Benefit Specialist Review Process April 2014

Disability benefit specialists (DBSs) receive primary supervision from the Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs) and other agencies that employ them. They receive training, technical assistance and general case oversight from a team of program attorneys (PAs) with expertise in public benefit programs.

Program attorneys provide case oversight to each DBS in the form of periodic review and assessment of: (1) caseload size and composition; (2) general case handling and documentation practices; and (3) utilization of training and technical assistance resources. Program attorneys do not have direct access to DBS case files. Therefore, they rely upon DBSs and their local employers to provide accurate information about DBS caseloads and a representative sample of DBS case files for their review.

In 2014, the Department of Health Services (DHS) is introducing statewide program standards to establish greater consistency in the PA review process. At the end of the first year of implementation, DHS will assess whether the process outlined in this document was successful in meeting program objectives and adjust the process as deemed necessary.

Objectives

The primary objectives of the annual DBS review process are:

1. To establish a consistent process for PA review of DBS caseloads, case handling and documentation practices, and technical assistance needs;
2. To establish and maintain regular communication between PAs and local supervisors at all ADRCs and other agencies that employ DBSs;
3. To provide feedback to DBSs and agency supervisors in a useful format;
4. To ensure all DBSs receive adequate support and follow best practices; and
5. To recognize that while DBS services can and should be informed by certain best practices, the broad scope of this program necessitates flexibility to adjust to the needs of individual clients and their local communities.

Process Overview

In 2014, PAs will review DBS caseloads, case files, and technical assistance guidelines annually during an onsite visit to every agency that employs DBSs. The review covers three areas, including overall caseload, a representative sample of case files, and technical assistance guidelines. Following the review, the PA will provide the DBS, and his or her supervisor, with a written summary of his or her findings. This summary may be used by the DBS and his or her supervisor in their agency's efforts to improve and maintain the overall quality of DBS services.



Preparing for the Annual Review

Program attorneys will reach out directly to the local supervisor when planning the onsite visit and strive to schedule a time to meet with each DBS, as well as his or her local supervisor. At least one week prior to the onsite visit, the DBS will provide the following reports to the PA for review:

1. Summary Report by DBS (past 12 months)
2. Client Log – Opened Cases by DBS (past 12 months)

Based on a review of these reports, the PA will identify six client cases for detailed review and will provide the DBS with a list of these cases at least two business days prior to the onsite visit. The DBS will select an additional six client case files for PA review. These case files should be representative of the overall composition of the caseload for that DBS. The DBS should be prepared to provide the PA with access to each of these case files in its entirety, in electronic or paper format, during the onsite visit.

The Annual Review

The annual review will address three aspects of DBS work: caseload, case files, and technical assistance guidelines.

1. Caseload Review

In advance of the onsite visit, the PA will review the caseload data contained in summary and client log reports provided by the DBS. The PA will review the number and type of currently open cases, as well as the number of cases that have been opened and closed over the past 12 months. During their onsite visit, the PA will discuss this data with the DBS. The DBS should be prepared to answer questions from the PA about the caseload data. Keeping in mind that DBS caseloads may vary for many reasons, the PA will assess if the caseload seems reasonable and appropriate. The PA will check to ensure that cases are being closed in a timely manner.

2. Case File Review

During the onsite visit, the PA will conduct a detailed review of the representative DBS case files that were identified in advance of the visit. The files may be provided to the PA in electronic or paper format. The DBS will be responsible for demonstrating that each file meets the criteria referenced below, and should be prepared to answer any questions the PA may have about the cases. The PA will check for the following:

- The file contains a signed client services agreement that reflects the scope of services provided, as stipulated in the DBS program policies and procedures.
- The DBS followed DBS program policies and procedures on case acceptance, closure and termination.
- The file contains copies of relevant documents.



Operational Practice Guidelines

- The file contains documentation of all DBS communications with the client, both written and verbal.
- The file contains documentation of DBS actions on the case and status of the case.
- Assistance and actions provided by the DBS were timely and fall within the scope of services as set forth in the client services agreement.
- The DBS consulted with the program attorney on any cases identified in the DBS technical assistance guidelines form.

Program attorneys will only monitor general case file quality and compliance with statewide DBS program policies and procedures. Monitoring and enforcement of DBS conformity with local agency-specific policies on file maintenance, recordkeeping, and file retention is the responsibility of the ADRC or other employing agency.

3. Technical Assistance Guidelines

During the annual review, the PA and the DBS will discuss the DBS's current level of knowledge and experience with various types of benefits cases. As a DBS gains knowledge and experience, he or she may be able to handle some types of cases without technical assistance from a PA. If the PA and the DBS mutually agree that the DBS no longer requires technical assistance with a specific type of case, then this will be documented by the PA. Any such agreement should not deter a DBS from contacting a PA for technical assistance. Regardless of experience level, DBSs may always contact a PA for technical assistance with any case and is strongly encouraged to consult with the PA in any complex situation.

Review Follow-up Activities

The ADRC or other agency that employs the DBS retains primary responsibility for evaluating DBS performance and addressing any problems identified by the PA related to DBS caseload management, case handling or case documentation.

Program attorneys will provide a summary of their annual review to the DBS and his or her local supervisor after the onsite visit. The summary can be used as a tool to assist the local supervisor in evaluating DBS performance and developing caseload management strategies.

A schedule for additional review by the PA within the same 12-month period may be implemented on a case-by-case basis as part of an agency's overall plan to address caseload management, case handling or case documentation problems identified during the DBS annual review process. Additional onsite visits may be limited by PA availability and require approval by the Office for Resource Center Development.

More Information

Questions and concerns about the annual DBS review process may be directed to the Office for Resource Center Development at DHSRCTeam@wi.gov or (608) 266-2536.