

Helpful Tips on how to write a Case Note

A Case Note summarizes your position at a review panel hearing.¹ Below are helpful tips on how to write case notes that are simple and easy to understand. Your case note should answer three questions:

1. What is your decision?
2. Why did you reach that decision?
3. How did you reach that decision?

Case Notes should only be 2 to 3 pages long. Avoid wordiness.²

Accurate

Identify the information that supports and does not support your decision. Explain why you prefer one account over the other.

Transparent

Identify sources of information. This could include your own observations, hospital records, police records, other clinical staff, family, friends. See “Practice Direction – Case Note” for more details.

Clear

Keep it simple. Translate all acronyms when first used. Explain psychiatric terms such as “delusion”, “hallucination”, “agitation”, “confusion”, “abusive”, “violent” or “high risk behaviour” by giving examples of what the patient or others said or did.

Chronological

Document events from oldest to most recent.

Coherent

Use paragraph headings. For example:

Introduce the patient – share only relevant details.

Family psychiatric history

Previous psychiatric history

History of current episode

Diagnosis – Primary and concurrent diagnoses, both physical and psychiatric. Consider differential diagnosis when appropriate.

Current Medical treatment and response to treatment.

Other current treatment

¹ Practice Direction – Case Note

² Excerpt from Wordiness, Berkeley University, Course on Case Writing

Further treatment plan

Criteria for continued detention

One paragraph for each criterion. Note, both parts of criterion 1 must be met. Detention will continue only if all criteria are met. By this point the evidence is already in the Case Note and can be briefly summarized.

1. Is the patient suffering from a disorder of the mind that requires treatment and seriously impairs their ability to react appropriately to their environment or to associate with others?
2. Does the patient require treatment in or through a designated facility?
3. Does the patient require care, supervision and control in or through a designated facility to prevent their substantial mental or physical deterioration or for their own protection or the protection of others?
4. Can the patient not be suitably admitted as a voluntary patient?

Avoiding Wordiness

Excerpt from Wordiness, Berkeley University, Course on Case Writing

What causes wordiness?

- Trying to sound too formal or academic
- Using unnecessary and vague modifiers. Typically, modifiers like *really*, *very*, *quite*, and similar words add no meaning to your writing.

Writing less wordy prose

Wordy	Concise
Based on the fact that	because
Despite the fact that	although
In the event that	if
At the present time	now
Until such time as	until
On a weekly basis	weekly
It is often the case that	often
Have the ability to	can
During the course of	during
Take under consideration	consider
To be of the opinion	to think
To make reference to	to refer to
In the final analysis	finally