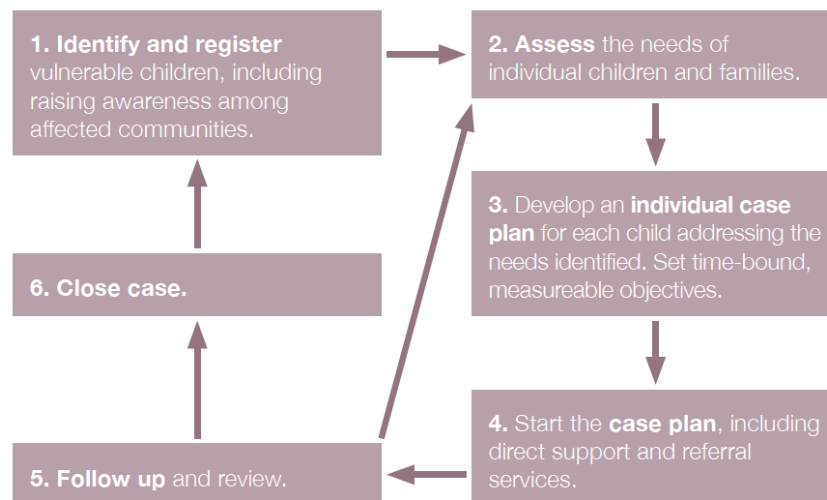


Chapter 5: Steps and Principles of Case Management¹

Case management involves a process and the use of a variety of models and tools, but its important base is in a trusting relationship between the case worker and the child and family. The process is often presented as steps; however, it is nonlinear, based in relationships and interactions, and therefore often involves several steps happening at the same time or a circling back in the process. Case management is highly individualized and focused on the client (in this case the child). There are different models of case management and slight variations on the basic steps can be found.



Step 1: Identify and register. Identify children for reintegration and finding or locating their families, or identifying children for alternative placements.

Step 2: Assess. Using a variety of tools, assess needs and strengths within all of the child's developmental areas. Assess the family conditions, needs, and strengths as well. This should be done for alternative care placements, including relatives or foster or adoptive families.

Step 3: Develop individual case plan. Case plans are flexible working documents that change as the child's situation changes. They should include the needs and strengths identified in the assessment process; strategies for addressing them through direct services or referrals to community services, and the placement decision, whether family reintegration, alternative family care, or independent living; and specific, measurable, and time-bound objectives to be reached for case closure. Good case planning includes a multidisciplinary approach (team meetings to discuss the plan) and participation of the child and family.

Step 4: Implement the case plan. Implementation includes preparing the child and family or caregiver, a matching process between child and alternative care giver, direct support services, and referral to other services. The case worker coordinates the implementation and follows the progress. Prevention of family separation and reintegration of a child into his or her family include family support services to address risk factors and strengthen protective factors. Planning for permanency is also important at this stage, for example, if a child is moving into temporary foster care—what will be his or her permanency plan?

Step 5: Follow up and review. The case worker must monitor the child and family wellbeing and progress closely. This involves regular visits over a period of time (determined on a case-by-case basis, but no shorter than two years for children reintegrated from institutions) whether to birth, extended, adoptive, or foster families. Follow-up should ensure that the family or caregiver and child are receiving services and support, successes and issues are identified, and the case plan is revisited as needed. If a child is transferred to another service (e.g., small group home), then the case management will also be transferred.

Step 6: Close case. Work with the child ends when the case plan is considered complete and support for the child or family is no longer needed, when a child and family is transferred to another organization (such as public child protection services), when a child “ages out” of the care, or if a child dies.

Principles of Case Management²

Do No Harm	Ensure that actions and interventions designed to support the child (and their family) do not expose him or her to further harm.
Prioritize the Best Interests of the Child	Prioritizing the best interests provides the basis for all decisions and actions taken, and for the way in which service providers interact children and their families.
Ensure Accountability	Be responsible and take responsibility for one’s actions.
Based on Sound Knowledge of Child Development and Child Rights	Make assessments and interventions on the basis of knowledge about the child’s development within his or her family and cultural context, and on basis of child protection.
Child’s Right to be Heard and Views Taken Seriously	Consult children and seek out their opinions. Take them into account in decisions that affect their lives.
Provide Culturally Appropriate Processes and Services	Recognize and respect diversity in the communities where you work.
Seek Informed Consent or Assent	Seek voluntary agreement from an individual who has the capacity to give consent, and who exercises free choice.
Respect Confidentiality and Share Information on a Need-to-Know Basis	Share information on a need-to-know basis. Protect information and ensure that it is accessible only to those authorized to access it.
Work in a Nondiscriminatory Way	Avoid treating a child differently because of his or her individual characteristics or a group he or she belongs to.
Maintain Professional Boundaries and Address Conflicts of Interest	Act with integrity by not abusing the power or the trust of the child or the child’s family.

1 Global Child Protection Working Group (2014). [Interagency Guidelines for Case Management and Child Protection: The Role of Case Management in the Protection of Children, A Guide for Policy and Program Managers and Case Workers.](#)

2 Source: Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare of Zimbabwe and UNICEF (2015). National Case Management System for the Welfare and Protection of Children in Zimbabwe.