

The "Yes, And" Progress Note Framework

Document Court Compliance AND Clinical Progress in a Single Note

How to Use This Framework: This template eliminates the need to write two separate narratives (one for court, one for clinical reality). Instead, structure your notes to capture BOTH dimensions authentically using the "Yes, And" approach. Document what the court needs to see AND what's actually happening clinically. Both are true. Document both.

Client Name:

Date:

Session Type:

SECTION 1: COURT COMPLIANCE STATUS

Attendance This Period:

Example: "Client attended 4/4 scheduled individual sessions and 3/4 group sessions (95% overall attendance rate)"

Drug Testing Results:

Example: "Completed 2 UAs as scheduled: 3/5/25 (negative all substances), 3/19/25 (positive for THC, client self-reported use prior to test)"

Court Requirement Adherence:

Example: "Client maintains compliance with all court-ordered requirements including weekly check-ins with probation officer and completion of community service hours (16/40 completed to date)"

Legal Status / New Incidents:

Example: "Zero new legal incidents or charges. Client reports positive check-in with PO on 3/10/25"

SECTION 1 TIP:

This is what courts care about most—attendance, testing, compliance. Be specific with numbers and dates. When documenting positive tests, note whether client self-reported (demonstrates engagement) and what clinical response was provided.

SECTION 2: CLINICAL PROGRESS

Harm Reduction Milestones:

Example: "Client reduced alcohol use from daily to weekends only (4 days use this month vs. 28 days previous month). Client implemented safety strategy of limiting quantity and not driving after drinking. Zero incidents requiring emergency response."

Skills Development & Application:

Example: "Client demonstrated application of coping skills during high-stress week (job loss). Utilized crisis plan by contacting therapist before use escalated, attended extra support meeting, and engaged family support. Shows increased capacity to reach out proactively rather than isolate."

Therapeutic Alliance & Engagement:

Example: "Client continues to build trust in therapeutic relationship, self-disclosing challenges and setbacks rather than minimizing. Actively participates in treatment planning and demonstrates ownership of recovery goals."

Quality of Life Improvements:

Example: "Client secured part-time employment at [location], working 20 hours weekly. Reports improved sleep (averaging 6-7 hours vs. 3-4 hours last month). Reconnected with two family members after 6-month estrangement. Mood remains stable."

SECTION 2 TIP:

This is where you document the ACTUAL clinical work happening. Focus on behaviors, not just feelings. Show progress even when client is still using—reduced frequency, increased safety, better support utilization, improved functioning. These are real clinical gains.

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SECTION 3: RISK ASSESSMENT & MANAGEMENT

Current Risk Factors:

Example: "Client reports increased financial stress due to job loss, which historically triggers use. Also noting upcoming court date (4/15/25) creating anxiety. Relationship with partner remains strained. These factors elevate short-term risk for use."

Protective Factors Strengthened:

Example: "Client has established stronger support network: now attending NA meetings 2x weekly (up from 0), has sponsor contact information, reconnected with sister who is aware of recovery goals. Demonstrates improved ability to identify triggers and utilize coping strategies before crisis."

Crisis Plan Effectiveness:

Example: "Client's crisis plan remains active and accessible. Client utilized plan effectively this period by contacting therapist during high-risk weekend. Plan will be updated to include new sponsor contact and sister as additional support."

Next Steps & Treatment Adjustments:

Example: "Increase session frequency to 2x weekly through court date to provide additional support. Connect client with employment counselor for job search assistance. Schedule joint session with partner for communication skills if client agrees. Continue monitoring stress levels and coping strategy utilization."

SECTION 3 TIP:

This section bridges court compliance and clinical reality. It shows you're actively managing risk (which courts care about) while being realistic about ongoing challenges (which is clinically honest). Always end with concrete next steps.

Sample "Yes, And" Progress Notes

Example 1: Client Self-Reports Weekend Use

Client attended 4/4 sessions this week (100% attendance) AND self-reported weekend substance use on Saturday night. Client tested positive for cocaine on Monday UA AND remained engaged in treatment, participating immediately in safety planning session. Client identified specific triggers that preceded use (argument with partner Friday evening, missed support meeting Saturday morning) AND developed concrete strategies to strengthen protective factors this week including scheduling daily check-in texts with sponsor and attending 3 meetings minimum. Client demonstrates continued commitment to treatment goals AND realistic engagement with relapse prevention strategies. No new legal incidents. Zero risk to community safety.

Example 2: Client Making Progress Despite Ongoing Use

Client maintained 95% attendance this month (19/20 scheduled sessions) AND reports reduction in alcohol use from daily consumption to 4 days this month (previously 28+ days). Client completed all court-required UAs on schedule AND shows progressive improvement in safety behaviors—no longer driving after drinking, reduced quantity per occasion, using only at home rather than bars. Client actively participated in development of harm reduction goals AND achieved measurable milestone of zero legal incidents or emergency room visits this month (previous pattern included monthly police contact). Employment maintained, housing stable, relationship with

probation officer positive. Treatment plan will continue current approach as client demonstrates sustained engagement and measurable risk reduction.

Example 3: Client in Crisis But Engaging Proactively

Client missed 1 of 4 sessions this week due to job loss crisis (75% attendance, client called to notify in advance) AND reached out same day to schedule crisis session. Client reports elevated stress and strong cravings AND successfully utilized crisis plan by contacting therapist, attending extra NA meeting, and staying with family member rather than isolating. Client did not use substances during high-risk period AND demonstrated significant skill development in help-seeking behavior. Client participated in problem-solving session regarding employment options, connected with vocational counselor, and identified three job leads this week. Client shows continued treatment commitment despite significant life stressor. Risk level assessed as temporarily elevated but well-managed through active safety planning and support mobilization.

CRITICAL REMINDER:

The "Yes, And" framework doesn't hide information from courts—it presents the FULL picture. You're documenting both court compliance measures AND clinical reality. Courts get the accountability data they need, and your clinical notes reflect honest, evidence-based practice. Both are true. Document both.