

Section 9 Correspondence/Communication

“If it was not written down, it was not said. If it was not written down, it did not happen.”
~~Pete Wright, parent rights attorney

Communication and the sharing of information is at the heart of your child’s care and an important piece of advocating for your child. Each phone call, letter, or email is a piece of your child’s story. Sometimes, questions or disputes may arise, and documentation is independent evidence that can clarify details, and help avoid future confusion and misunderstandings.

Types of Communication

Communication takes place in the form of phone calls, face-to-face meetings, emails, formal letters, memos and informational handouts.

Effective Documentation

Documentation of communications, regardless of the type, should record the “Who, What, Where, When, How, Why” of the topic. It is advisable to summarize verbal communications in the form of a letter or email to ensure understanding and to follow up on action items. Include the names of all people with whom you spoke. If you sign a consent or permission form, get a copy for your records. Your copy will serve as a record of what you agreed to. Calendars, telephone logs and journals can be useful tools as well.

Letter Writing

Letters are a good way of communicating with others about your ideas, requests and concerns. Putting your thoughts on paper give you the opportunity to take some time to think through what you want to say, and allow you to take as long as you need to state your issue clearly and specifically. Letters can also help avoid misunderstandings of what someone said, or thought they said.

Other reasons for writing a letter might be to:

- Discuss a problem.
- Request an evaluation (s).
- Request a meeting.
- Make contact with someone.
- Request records.
- Follow up with eligibility, services, any type of meeting or a discussion.
- Give positive feedback.

Correspondence/Communication 9.1

THINGS TO REMEMBER:

- Keep a copy of the letter, plus all attachments. If sending a statement or bill- keep the original with you and send a copy.
- Have someone proofread your letters.
- Include attachment(s) or enclosure(s).
- If necessary, send copies of letter to any necessary people/providers.
- Letter should not be more than two (2) pages long (not including attachments).

What else do you need to say in your letter?

***Put your return address in your letter. Envelopes can be thrown away!

Be sure there is a date on your letter.

Thank them for their time and attention they are giving to your problem/issue.

Sample Letter

Today's Date (include month, day & year)

Your Full Return Address

City, State Zip Code

Full name of Person to whom you're writing

Title

Name of Organization/Medical Center/Agency

Street Address

City, State, ZIP Code

Dear (Name of person, use title and last name)

In this paragraph explain who you are, give the full name of your child and his or her health condition/ illness/ disability, and, VERY BRIEFLY, explain the reason you are writing.

In this paragraph explain what you would like to have happen or what concern or difference you are experiencing. This is the time to "tell your story". Be sure to clearly state how the issue affects you and your child. If possible, include a photo of your child.

This is the paragraph to clearly state what it is you want- summarizing the story. Be as clear and concise as possible. If what you want is in regards to reports/health documents, invoices and/ or payments, put all that pertinent information here- including invoice or statement date and account number. Again, this is where you need to clearly state what it is you want (not what you don't want).

State what type of response you want. For instance, do you need to meet with someone; do you want a return letter, or a phone call? Do you want a copy of records or billing? Set a reasonable date for them to respond to you.

Finally, give your daytime telephone number, address, e-mail and let them know you expect to hear from them soon (or give a day, "by the 10th").

Sincerely,

Your full name

Correspondence/Communication 9.3

