

Getting Organized Early Years – Birth to 3

As you start out on your journey in advocating for your little one, one important step is organizing the paperwork that you are receiving about your child. This may also include using documents to record your child's development or responses to treatments or interventions. With a system in place to organize the right documents, it will be easier to find the information you need to share with professionals and make decisions about what your little one may need.



This packet provides some guidance on how to get started with organizing information and records during your child's early years. When your child turns three, and if eligible for special education, refer to the *Getting Organized School Years* packet, as it will guide you on organizing papers related to special education. During the time when your little one is transitioning to the preschool years, you may want to include early years information in your school age binder as well. Be sure to check out the forms in this packet that

will help you gather and organize information about your child.

Other Related Materials:

Information Packets:

- Transition to Preschool
- Advocating for Your Child with Special Needs
- Getting Organized School Years
- Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP)

Help! Sheets:

- Help! My child is transitioning out of Early Start
- Help! I need community resources to support my little one
- Help! How can I manage my worry and stress?
- Help! How do I decide about a preschool special education placement?

Having specific facts and documents provides a solid base for collaborative communication and advocacy. You are your child's best advocate. Being organized will help you advocate for your child more effectively. Organization is an ongoing process. It is never too early or too late to begin!

Overview

Organize Your Child's Early Years Papers

Getting organized will help you and others support your child's development and better meet your child's specific needs. A binder containing important papers about your little one will help you see trends and patterns and can improve your communication with specialists who are working with your child.

Create a One-Page Profile

Some parents find that creating a one page summary of your child's strengths, challenges, and interests makes it easier to introduce your child and your concerns to others. Professionals often appreciate having a single page with highlights from many different records that you have. Possible areas to include:

- Basic information: birthday/age, siblings, pets, interests
- Medical: medications, conditions, hospital stays, surgeries
- Firsts — for example: first time sat up, crawled, ate solids, babbled, first word
- Strengths and challenges
- Interventions and approaches: what seems to work well and not so well
- Current and past therapies, home programs, day care, play groups



Obtain and Organize Records

Sometimes in all the flurry of parenting a child with special needs, we don't always put key documents in one place! Easy to think "I will get to that later." Set a goal and get started.

1. **Find the papers.** Check to see if you have your child's records such as medical test results, assessments reports, letters from specialists to your pediatrician, etc. Check your appointment book to remind yourself where you took your child and what records might be missing. Contact the appropriate agency or office to get copies if you've misplaced them or never received them. If your child is a Regional Center client, your service coordinator may be able to help you.
2. **Get a large 3-ring binder and divider tabs.** Make sure you have a paper hole-punch too.
3. **Select a photo of your little one to put on the front cover.** Parents have found that having a photo of your child links the documents to your child.
4. **Decide on what sections you want in your binder.** Use our "What to Include" page as a guide. Sort your papers into each category and put in your new binder.
5. **Set up a system** to file new papers promptly — at a minimum, have a place or an in-box where you put all new paperwork you receive before you put them in the binder.

If organization is not your strength, ask a friend who has these skills to help you. Your efforts will pay off!

What to Include

Key Contact List

This is a list of key people such as case managers, service coordinators, therapists, pediatricians, early intervention specialists, medical insurance coordinators.

Contact Log

This is a log of all contacts you make with those serving your child.

Communications

This section is for letters, notes, emails, and phone calls to and from those serving your child.

Assessment Reports

This section is for reports on any assessments, evaluations, tests given, or parent questionnaires that you have filled out. Include anything from early intervention specialists, regional center staff, speech/language pathologists, occupational therapists, behaviorists, social/play therapists, etc.

Developmental Milestones

A log of new skills your little one has gained. Keep in mind each child develops at his or her own pace. Some parents will record the date they first see the skill and put an "E" for

emerging. Later, when the skill is seen regularly, put an "M" for mastered. See <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/index.html>.

Observations

Include here any notes or documents you have created that capture any observations of your child. These might be logs describing a behavior and when it happened or a tally of the number of times something happened. Example: "Cried for two hours. Calmed with music." Some parents use a blank calendar and put any notes on days that something happened or didn't happen. These might include brief comments on the challenges and successes of different events in your child's day such as therapy sessions, ABA, school day, playdates, etc...

Individual Family Service Plan

All documents in your IFSP (if your child is in Early Start).

Medical Records

This section is for information from doctor's visits, hospital stays, and test results/diagnoses. It may include notes on a complicated pregnancy and/or birth; baby's Apgar

scores; genetic evaluation report; vaccine administration record; neonatal admission/discharge/transfer forms; hearing, vision or other test results; growth charts, etc. It is not necessary to include all medical records, just the notes or records you refer to often when speaking with and/or filling out forms with specialists.

Medication Log

For recording a history of medications taken including dosage, side effects, positive effects, and any reports given to you by health care providers.

Other options:

- If your child is in Early Start, a copy of your parent rights in the front pocket
- Calendar showing dates of all meetings or appointments



Developmental Milestone Log



Each baby and toddler develops skills at his or her own pace. Use this form to record important skills your little one has gained. Check the Matrix website for more information on milestones and timelines.

AREA & SKILL	DATE SEEN
Language: Cooing, babbling, words, sentences...	
Motor Skills: Lifting head, sitting, crawling, walking, drawing...	
Social/Emotional: Smiling, laughing, sharing...	
Self-Help/Adaptive: Feeding, dressing, toileting...	
Cognitive/Thinking: Finds hidden object, peek-a-boo...	

Key People Contact List

	NAME	PHONE	EMAIL	ADDRESS
Service Coordinator				
Therapist				
Therapist				
Pediatrician				
Medical Specialist				
Agency				
Agency				
Agency				
Other				

Contact Log

Keep a record of all contacts you make, with whom, via which method (email, phone, letter, in person) and key points (issues and actions).

DATE/ TIME	PERSON	METHOD (i.e. phone, email, in person)	KEY ISSUES/ACTIONS

Medication Log

DATE START/END	MEDICATION	DAILY DOSE	RESPONSE	SIDE EFFECTS	COMMENTS