

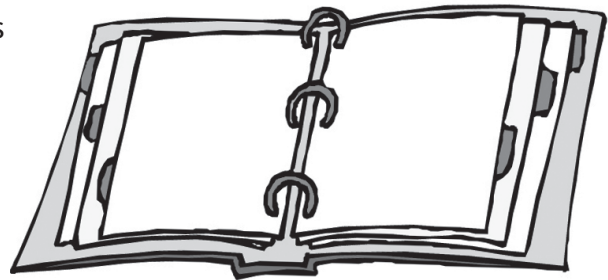
# Getting Organized

## Your Child's School-Age Years

**B**eing an advocate for your child is easier when you are organized and prepared to discuss your child's needs and any concerns. With organized paperwork you will be able to refer to prior IEP documents, look up information in assessment reports, track your child's progress and refresh your memory about specific commitments and communications. Having specific facts and documents provides a solid base for collaborative communication and advocacy.

**STEP ONE is having information! This packet along with our IEP Tool Kit will give you tips on:**

- organizing a binder of your child's documents — both school and medical
- obtaining documents from the school district
- understanding assessments and IEP goal documents (IEP Toolkit)
- organizing key contact information and logging in your communications with these contacts.



### **Other Related Materials:**

- Advocating for Your Child with Special Needs
- Assessments-School Age Years
- IEP Tool Kits:
  - Prep for Annual or Triennial Meeting
  - Educational Benefit Review
- Understanding Your Child's IEP Document

Once you have your papers organized, it will be easier to proceed with the other steps: identifying your child's needs, making priorities, thinking of interventions and questions to ask and preparing for an IEP meeting.

Organization is an ongoing process. It is never too late to begin!

# Organizing School-Related Papers An Overview

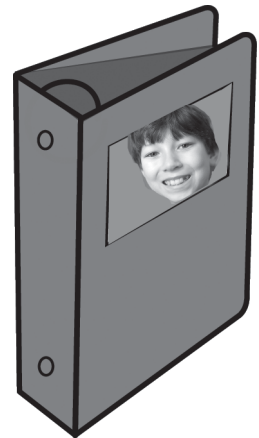
Getting organized will help you support your child and the school in meeting your child's unique needs. A binder containing your child's important papers will help you see trends and patterns and can improve your communication with the school. Creating a one page summary of your child's strengths, interests and needs to give teachers at the beginning of the year has proved helpful to many parents.

## Create a One-Page Profile

A one-page profile makes it easier for busy teachers and professionals to learn the highlights of your child's IEP as well as some more personal attributes.

Categories might include:

- Basic information: age, family members, pets, interests, leisure activities  
Medical: medication and any impact at school (example: not hungry at lunch, often thirsty, lethargic) and/or any physical limitations (example: seizure resulted in weakness on left side)
- Education: tutoring, remediation, school changes, key IEP points, classroom accommodations
- Strengths and challenges



## 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. Check to see if you have the last 2 or 3 years of your child's records. If not, make a written request for your child's records, both the cumulative and Special Education files. Make your request as specific as possible.
2. Get a large 3-ring binder, divider tabs, and a 3-hole punch.
3. Our page "What to Include," which lists possible sections for the binder, might help you decide how many tabs you will need.
4. Once you decide what sections you want for each of your divider tabs, sort the papers with the most current ones on top.
5. If you have many years of documents, one binder might be the current year and the most recent past year. Other binders could be years before that!
6. While not always easy with busy lives, put papers in each section promptly. If this is hard, make a commitment to yourself to do it several times a year.....and most importantly BEFORE any meetings.

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 who you will be contacting such as teachers, therapists, administrators, physicians, case managers.

### Contact Log

This is a log of all contacts you make with people and the reason for the contact. Some parents include copies of written communications in this section. Meeting notes could go here.

### Assessment Reports

This section is for reports that review test results or other assessment tools that have been given to your child in one-on-one settings. Your IEP consent to assess forms could go here.

### Group Test Reports

This section is for reports of tests that your child took in group settings such as the annual state tests. There are three categories of state tests depending on how much your child's special needs impact their abilities: STAR, CMA, and CAASPP.

### Report Cards and Progress Reports

This would include any general education report cards and progress reports. Also include here your child's IEP progress reports on goals, which you should receive as often as you receive report cards

### Work Samples

Throughout the year, save examples of the work your child has done that either show progress or continuing challenges. This might include writing samples, unit/chapter tests, math worksheets, reading quizzes, artwork.

### Observations

Include here any notes or documents you create that capture observations you have had on your child. Examples: behavior logs, time samples (how long it took your child to complete something such as homework), tally log (count of how many times something happened such as forgetting to bring books home). Some parents use a blank calendar and put any notes on days that something happened or didn't happen.

### Individual Education Plan

The annual IEP document and any amendments. The IEP includes pages with basic information on your child (grade, age, address, dates of key meetings etc.), description of eligibility, goals, accommodations or modifications, state testing plans, services & placement. Certain students will have additional documents such as behavior plans and/or transition plans.

### Medication Log

A log for recording medications taken including dosage, side effects, positive effects.

### Other options:

- A photograph of your child for the outside cover of your binder
- A one-page summary about your child
- A calendar showing dates of all meetings/appointments
- Reference materials such as your procedural safeguards, a chart showing how to understand assessment scores, acronym list.

# School Records

Accurate and complete records ensure that school personnel and parents have access to the same information. In reviewing your child's records, you may find you are missing a document or the school is missing something from your records. School records are so important in planning and serving students with special needs that this issue is addressed in federal law. Laws governing student records include both federal and California special education law. These include the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), as well as the California Education Code. For more information, ask for your district's school records policy.

## **Where are School Records Kept?**

There are several types of records that may be located in different places: a cumulative file (cum file) maintained at the school, a confidential file which often is maintained by a special education professional, and a compliance file (at the school district's office).

## **How Can I See or Get a Copy of School Records?**

Call or make a written request to the school principal or special education director. You may ask for copies or you may ask to review the papers at the school, at which time you can then ask for copies of only those records you feel you need. California law states that schools must give you access to your child's records and/or copies within **5 business days** after written or oral request. Schools can charge for copies unless that is a financial hardship.

## **What Records Can I See?**

Parents can see all records, files, documents and other materials that are maintained by the school system and contain information relating to their child. This includes all records that refer to your child in any personally identifiable manner.

## **Are there Records I Can't See?**

Personal notes of teachers, counselors, and or school administrators made for their own use and shown to no one else (except a substitute teacher); records of school security police when they are kept separate from other records and used for law-enforcement purposes; personnel records of school employees. You also cannot have access to records on other students.

## **May I Make Changes to School Records?**

If you feel that a document is inaccurate or misleading, you have a right to request that it be removed or corrected. Such requests are submitted to the superintendent. If denied, you can appeal the decision in writing to the school board. The decision by the school board is final. If the school board does not agree with your request to change or correct information in your child's records, you have the right to submit a written statement with your objections included in your child's records. Examining your child's school records should be a regular activity for you as a parent. Consider reviewing the records each year. Knowing the contents of your child's school records provides a basis for your preparation in the entire special education process..

# Key People Contact List



NAME AND AGENCY*	PHONE	EMAIL	ADDRESS
Gen. Ed. Teacher			
Spec. Ed. Teacher			
Psychologist/ Counselor			
Related Services: Speech/language, OT			
Spec. Ed. Administrator			
Principal/Asst. Principal			
Superintendent			
SELPA Director			
<b>NON SCHOOL</b>			
Matrix	800.578.2592		94 GALLI DRIVE, NOVATO, CA 94949
Pediatrician			
Psych/Psychiatrist			
Counselor			
Ed Therapist/Tutor			
O.T.			
Speech/Lang.			
Other			

\*Consider physicians, therapists (OT, speech, PT, behaviorist...), case manager, other helpful agencies

# 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