

Documenting Changes in a Person's Status

YOUR OBSERVATIONS ARE IMPORTANT

Remember at all times when assisting an individual with an intellectual or developmental disability that the individual may not be able to give you any information about discomfort or symptoms that he or she may be experiencing.

And you, as the person who is providing assistance and care are often the eyes and ears for the doctors and nurses who must assess the medical status of the individual and make diagnostic and treatment decisions.

KNOW WHAT IS NORMAL FOR THE PEOPLE YOU SUPPORT

Knowing the people you support, their usual behaviors and normal activities is important because it helps you to recognize what is not normal for them.

You can get to know what is normal for the people you serve by maintaining a record of vital signs, which will serve as a reference so you know when there is a change in the individual's status. This is also information that may be valuable when the individual visits the doctor, sees a nurse, or is sent to the emergency room.

KNOW WHEN TO DOCUMENT

When a person has a serious medical condition or a recurring medical condition it is important to document whenever there is a change in the individual's condition and whenever there are changes in the individual's behavior, mood, or energy level from what is normal for that individual. Even the smallest fact can save a person's life. Proper documentation will assure the best possible care.

When a person is given a new medication, it is important to document any physical, mental or behavioral changes that are noted after the person begins taking the medication.

KNOW HOW TO DOCUMENT

- When you are documenting, write legibly, if you have bad handwriting, print your notes.
- Document how the person is responding to changes in living conditions, diet, medication, therapy, etc.
- Use terms that everyone can understand and use medical terms only when necessary.
- Document as soon as an event happens if possible before you forget important facts.

Recording and communicating information is very important to care but in the event of a bad outcome, it is evidence of care provided and received. Good factual documentation is especially important in the event of a negative outcome or death.