



SPECIAL NEEDS RESOURCE PROJECT

e-newsletter

Things to Think About!

If It Isn't On Paper...

By Linda Jorgensen

I take a lot of ribbing about the three large filing cabinets full of documentation I keep in my storage room. Why store all that paper when most of the documents could be stored on a disc, a USB stick or even on-line in an e-file?

Well, the crux of the matter is this. A lot of this information falls under the, "If it isn't on paper, it didn't happen" category. We do have a backup plan in case of fire, flood, or other disaster. The majority of the important documentation has been scanned to back up disks and kept in another safe location with original court documents, copies of birth certificates and other essential documents. But the majority of the originals, the ones I use frequently, stay in the file where I can quickly retrieve them to fax, copy and mail, or hand carry when necessary.

In the many years I've been dealing with government programs, insurance companies, medical providers, military entities, and other agencies and groups I have learned two things. One, electronic files can, and often do, become corrupted rendering the data stored on them useless. And, two, files not on an electronic system are often stored in an obscure spot and then lost by the originating entity. Try searching for therapy files stored in orange boxes in a shed or storage unit, or piece together an accurate treatment timeline utilizing records from more than one treatment provider with records on a 3 inch floppy disc, or rebuild 8 years of a recorded military career as the electronic file at Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) was corrupted and unreadable. Not a simple task let me tell you. In each case I was able to "rebuild" these records for use since I had an original copy of needed documents on file at home. Without them this would have been impossible.

So why do I need a hard copy? Most offices, especially government and military, will not accept information provided on a disk or a USB stick. These methods are considered a "security risk" to the agencies computer system. A paper copy (often called a hard copy) of the needed documents generally must be faxed, scanned and emailed, mailed, or hand carried for submission. If you can't email it or mail it a hand-carried piece of paper is the only way to provide copies. Since our scanned document disks are not kept on site having a hard copy on file makes it much easier, and faster, to access and send when needed.

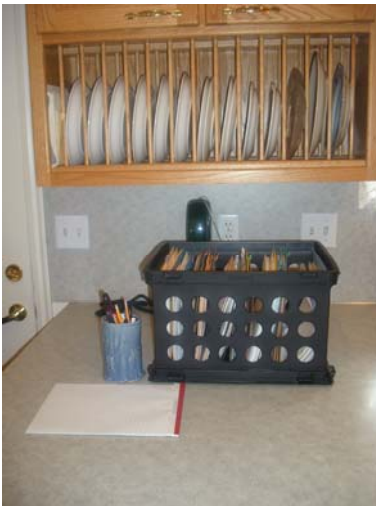


By Brandan Atkin

For further help:

A [Call Form](#) is available under the Forms Section of our website.

Be sure to keep your documented materials handy.



If there is anything that is not discussed in our newsletters and you would like to see it discussed, or you would like to be added to our newsletter mailing list, please contact us at snrproject@hotmail.com

What to Keep

Special needs families need to keep more than the usual utility bills and bank statements. They also need to keep originals and copies of the following:

- First IEP from Early Intervention Preschool or Kindergarten programs
- At least 2 IEP reports each from elementary school, junior high and high school years (I recommend saving those that show the most change but in reality I've saved them all)
- Last IEP transition/graduation from high school to adult programs (generally at age 22. Establishes an ongoing need for services)
- Medical evaluation forms – especially early diagnostic evaluations and continuing progress evaluations.
- Medical records of significant events, treatments, progress notes from therapies, immunizations, surgeries, etc.
- Letters of authorization for medical goods or services
- Letters of appeal and supporting documentation for denied medical goods and services
- Medical bills and explanation of benefits statements
- Medical sufficiency statements
- Letters of incapacitation
- Manuals, receipts, and warranties for medical equipment

Many of the above listed documents will be used many times over in establishing the course of a disability over an individual's life time. It is imperative a paper trail be available for review when needed. These can also be used as supporting documentation for a letter of justification for future needed goods and services.

Military families will find that the redundancies still built in the DEERS/EFMP/ECHO systems will require constant resubmission of older documents. IEPs are required for many disabled dependents to obtain an ID card. My daughter graduated from the school system in 2007 and upon our last visit to our local Military Personnel Office/Pass and ID we were asked for her "most recent IEP" as part of the approval process for an ID card! That last IEP is now 4 years old but will need to be used every time we need new ID cards. I keep 3 copies of that one.

Military Families

Military families have extra documentation to keep. I file every form we receive from a military entity. Period. If a DD form requires weeks of work, support documentation by civilian or military medical authority and/or includes a copy of a court order this will be a group of forms/letters/documents to keep track of. Any time you are submitting forms make a copy of the entire packet for your file. Put in a binder and properly labeled these documents will be available for use any time they are needed. I take my binder with me every time we go to the Base for any action other than visiting the Base Exchange or the Commissary. Don't go through the process more than once. Keep your originals or copies of the originals if the originals will not be returned to you.

Military members will also want to make a hard copy of any order, personnel action, promotion, award, letter of commendation, etc. to keep on file. This not only ensures the service member will preserve their record intact but the accompanying benefits and services for their disabled dependents once the member is released or separated from active duty to retirement.

It took over 20 months submitting 45-50 documents every few weeks and working directly with a DMDC case worker to rebuild my husband's service record. Being able to supply the needed missing documents to the case worker allowed her to restore his service record accurately, ensuring proper verification, and credit, was given to my husband for time served. His military retirement benefits, disability benefits and other services due him as a veteran are all directly impacted by his record. This also directly impacts the benefits our daughter receives as she is a disabled dependent enrolled in DEERS under his sponsorship. This record MUST be correct.

Make your filing cabinet your friend. Have a backup storage plan to ensure safe keeping of your valued documentation and prevent loss in the event of a disaster. Maintaining your important files will ensure your documents will be accessible when you need them.

Remember, "If it isn't on paper, it didn't happen."