



# Things to Think About!

## Medical Sufficiency Letters Revisited

By Linda Jorgensen



By Brandan Atkin

For further reading:

SNRP March 2010 Newsletter:

[http://www.snrproject.com/download/newsletter/v6n3-Guardianship\\_and\\_Declaration\\_of\\_Incapacitation.pdf](http://www.snrproject.com/download/newsletter/v6n3-Guardianship_and_Declaration_of_Incapacitation.pdf)

SNRP May 2010 Newsletter:

[http://www.snrproject.com/download/newsletter/v6n5-Dependency\\_Determination.pdf](http://www.snrproject.com/download/newsletter/v6n5-Dependency_Determination.pdf)

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](mailto:snrproject@hotmail.com)

Our most commonly asked question still is, “What is a Medical Sufficiency Statement/Letter and how do I get one for my dependent?”

The actual term “sufficiency” is a misnomer which creates a lot of confusion. Perhaps Medical *Insufficiency* Letter would be a better term for it. A Medical Sufficiency Letter is not a letter stating an individual’s capabilities and strengths. On the contrary, its purpose is to focus on everything that is negative and wrong, physically, intellectually, psychologically, and emotionally, with an individual. Simply put, a statement or letter of *medical* sufficiency addresses the *medical* status, mental and/or physical, of an individual and must be accurate and complete with inglorious detail. This is the most depressing letter anyone will ask to have written.

These letters, or statements, must be updated on a regular basis by the individual’s Primary Care Physician. This letter is then submitted as proof of a dependent’s current “Medical Sufficiency” when applying for an incapacitation status, favorable dependency determinations, ID cards and other benefits and services.

### Medical Sufficiency Statement

A letter of Medical Sufficiency is pretty straight forward. It is a formal statement written in narrative form by an individual’s Primary Care Physician regarding that individual’s current medical condition. This letter should contain the following information:

- Individual’s name, birth date and age
- current diagnosis
- date of onset of the disability (example: at birth, age 6 months, post-accident which occurred \_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_-20\_\_\_\_ etc.)
- the individual’s current physical, cognitive, behavioral status
- functional level (list what the individual CANNOT do or needs assistance doing)
- current treatments
- mobility status, if applicable (ambulatory with walker/crutch/cane, uses a manual or power wheelchair, etc.)
- prognosis for recovery
- prognosis for ability to support self in the future
- safety issues brought on by the condition

- any other statements regarding the individual's current medical status which may be deemed necessary

### **Additional Information for Individuals with Autism and Spectrum Disorders**

Autism and Spectrum disorders can be difficult to write about as the symptoms are unique to each individual. It is important for the evaluating physician to list ALL the symptoms an individual has AND the way that particular symptom negatively affects, or interferes with, normal function.

A good example of this would be as follows:

“John is completely self-absorbed. He is unable to focus on individuals or activities going on around him. This interferes with his ability to safely navigate a crowded room, cross a busy street or identify safety hazards in his immediate environment, inside or outside, without full assistance. He must be closely monitored for safety at all times.”

Or,

“John is easily over stimulated by bright, colorful lights and loud noises. His reaction to sudden noise is to run away from the source of the sound or hide in the nearest corner. He becomes totally incapable of speech or hearing and acknowledging others until physically removed from the area and calmed. John must be continually monitored for self-safety and assistance when these episodes of over stimulation occur.”

Stating the symptom and the impact of that symptom upon the individual is key to ensuring the evaluator understands the gravity of the problem. It is also vital to point out personal safety issues for the individual and to others as the case may be. These clusters of symptoms are unique to each individual and must be addressed individually. A blanket statement will not work in this instance.

A civilian physician's letter should be written on approved letterhead and contain full contact information to include address and phone numbers of both the physician and the medical facility, if appropriate.

A letter written by a physician from a Military Treatment Facility (MTF) should be submitted on the approved DoD form as dictated by each branch of service. These forms should be readily available to medical staff at each treatment facility.

### **Four Most Common Mistakes**

- Failure to allow enough time for your PCM to dictate and print a letter. Depending on the facility or office this process can take up to 3 weeks.
- Failure to submit a complete letter and supporting documentation if needed. Make sure all the detail you need is included the first time around.
- Failure to include the date.
- Lack of signature. Be sure the letter has been properly signed by the individual who originated it.

Letters of Medical Sufficiency are a vital part of the application process for Dependency Determinations, ID cards and other benefit programs. Failure to submit a complete letter can derail your entire application process. By submitting a current and accurate letter you'll be able to speed the process and obtain the services you need.

**One Last Tip:** If a specialized letter or set of forms is required for a specific action, make copies of the entire packet. If you have the opportunity, **KEEP THE ORIGINALS!** You'll most likely need them later.

