



Maintaining Child Health Records in Child Care Settings

Why is it important to maintain child health records? Maintaining accurate records is essential to providing quality care and protecting the health and safety of children in child care settings. Children's health records can help child care providers identify preventive health needs such as immunizations or dental care, prepare a special care plan for children with chronic health conditions or special health needs such as asthma, and determine whether to include or exclude children from care because of their illness.

Requiring accurate health information encourages families to have a primary health care provider for each child and facilitates communication between parents, health care providers and child care providers. If families do not have a regular health care provider, child care providers can connect them with local resources to help them find one (call the Healthline at 800-333-3212 if you need assistance finding resources).

Content of Health Records

California Licensing Requirements states that in child care centers, the contents of a child's health record can include, but are not limited to:

- Name, address and phone number of medical, dental or mental health care providers.
- Documentation of current immunizations ("blue card") or signed waiver by parent releasing child from immunizations.
- Medical assessment, including dietary allergies and restrictions.
- Emergency instructions, and signed consent for emergency medical treatment.
- Record of illness or injury requiring treatment by a health care provider or dentist, and for which the center provided assistance.
- Record of current medications, including the name of prescribing health care provider and instructions.

- Signed and dated authorization for activity away from the center.

Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards: Guidelines for Out-of-Home Child Care Programs recommends maintaining a file for each child in one central location within the facility. In addition to the licensing requirements, the National Health and Safety Standards recommends that each file include the following information:

- Health history completed by the parent at admission, preferably with staff involvement
- Child's health insurance
- A duplicate of emergency information for field trips
- Authorization to release child to anyone other than custodial parent (if appropriate)

This additional information gives the provider a more comprehensive picture of the child's health status. Complete and thorough information is necessary for providing appropriate care during an emergency. Children's health records and forms should be updated at least every year or sooner if changes occur, such as adjustments in medication or changes in emergency contact information.

Confidentiality and Access to Records

Each child care program will need to find a balance between keeping information confidential to protect the privacy of children and families and making information available to caregivers in a way that provides the best quality of care.

Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards: Guidelines for Out-of-Home Child Care Programs explains that while health information needs to be available to caregivers, the information should be carefully handled and made

available *only* when needed to protect the health and safety of those involved. It states that “prior, informed written consent of the parent/guardian is required for the release of records/information (verbal and written) to other service providers.” Child care programs should be the central point for this agreement of information exchange, keeping track of consent forms that give permission for information to be shared. *Caring for Our Children* also recommends that child care programs establish and follow a written policy on confidentiality of the records of children and staff that ensures that the facility will not disclose materials in the records without the written consent of parents or legal guardian (see our sample *Information Exchange Form* and consent forms, available on the CCHP Web site).

The Record-Keeping Team

Up-to-date records can be extraordinarily useful for providing the best care for children in child care. Therefore, it is essential that parents, child care providers and health care providers come together to make sure that the children’s health records are as accurate as possible. This is an opportunity to establish and maintain clear lines of communication between these critical caregivers in a young child’s life.

Parents are responsible for filling out preadmission forms completely and correctly. Parents should make sure that they inform the child care provider of any changes to the information in the record as soon as possible. Parents also are responsible for telling the child care provider about any specific health needs or any circumstances in the child care setting that may influence the child’s health.

Child care providers are a crucial link for children’s health because they are in a position to observe and monitor health and behavior. Child care providers are responsible for maintaining children’s records, which requires them to communicate with parents and health care providers. Child care providers are also responsible for using the information in the children’s records appropriately while maintaining confidentiality.

Health care providers are responsible for performing a well-child physical examination and filling out the appropriate form for the child care provider. Health

care providers should make sure that they are informed about the child care environment, and should have the name and phone number of the child care provider readily available to be able to communicate with them about any important health information after obtaining parental consent to do so.

Child Care Health Consultants (CCHCs) can help child care providers develop policies that suit the needs of their program and the children and families they serve. CCHCs can also review children’s health records (with permission from parents), help child care programs assess the health needs of the children in their care, and facilitate communication between child care providers and parents about health and safety topics.

Useful Resources

California Childcare Health Program (CCHP). CCHP provides the California Childcare Healthline at (800) 333-3212 and an informative Web site at www.ucsfchildcarehealth.org.

Child Care Health Consultants—Some counties have CCHCs who can assist child care providers with health and safety concerns.

Model Child Care Health Policies developed by the Pennsylvania Chapter of American Academy of Pediatrics.

Healthy Young Children: A Manual for Programs (4th Ed) developed by the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

References

Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards: Guidelines for Out-of-Home Child Care Programs, American Academy of Pediatrics, American Public Health Association, National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care, AAP, APHA, MCHB 2002.

Model Child Care Health Policies, Pennsylvania American Academy of Pediatrics, 4th Edition, September 2002.

California Department of Social Services, Community Care Licensing Manuals, Online California Code Regulations, Title 22.

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