

Documentation !

- There are three words of utmost importance for a foster parent to learn before they take their VERY FIRST placement !

Those three words are...

1st WORD

WRITE it DOWN

then
COMMIT it to MEMORY



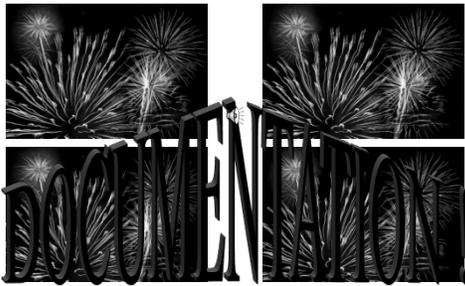
DOCUMENTATION!

2nd WORD !

REMEMBER THIS
WORD!

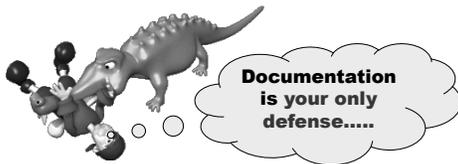
DOCUMENTATION !

3rd WORD !



Documentation !

- **Question #1.** SO, how important is it?



ANSWER #1. It is vital to your survival as a Foster Parent that you learn the correct way to Document everything that takes place in your home.....

Scenario #1 !

Your foster daughter is playing on the floor of the kitchen while you are fixing dinner. She is eleven months old. She has her favorite toy, pie pans, and is banging them together. You're stirring the gravy and you accidentally drop the spoon that you were stirring with...there's a sudden scream.



What to do !

You pick up your little one, checking very carefully. You don't see any signs of a burn !

There is a knock on the door. You carry the baby with you to answer the door.

It's your neighbor Jenny ! The time is 5:56 PM, Monday the 21st of September.

What should you do ?

1. Take the baby to the emergency room ?
2. The baby's not hurt so you see no need to do anything ?
3. Do you think to yourself call the social worker in charge and report it in the morning?
4. Make an appointment with the baby's doctor?

Which one should you do ?

What does your manual say?

Have you read the agency's manual?

Do you even have a copy ?



Scenario #2 !

Johnny your six year foster son comes home from school with a skinned knee. He tells you he was running at recess today at school and fell on the pavement.



When he went to the school nurse she put a bandage on it after cleaning it up for him. Uncle Jerry stops by after dinner and makes comment about the nice bandage he has on his knee. Johnny tells him all about his adventure at school.....!

Documentation !

What would you do about this incident ?



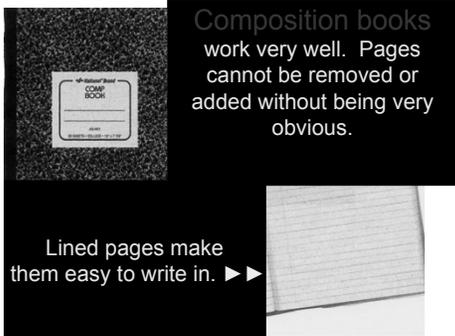
School Records.

- You should have received a copy of the incident report from the school. If not get one for your loose leaf notebook.
- Record this incident in your journal, just as your foster child tells you...using the child's own words.
- Be sure to include the date, the approximate time he takes recess at school, the name of his teacher, the name of the school nurse, or person, he was taken to. NEVER rely totally on the school to keep records of this incident.
 - NEVER RELY ON ANYONE'S MEMORY,
 - NOT YOURS... NOT THE SCHOOLS.

What do you need !

- Prior to receiving a new placement you should have on hand two books.
- 1) A journal, (composition book), for each child. **Put their name on the journal prior to their arrival at your home.**
- This journal is one in which the pages cannot be ripped out or replaced without being very obvious.
- **NOTE: spiral notebooks are NOT acceptable as journals for the purpose of DOCUMENTATION in a court of law.**

Now What to Use !



Composition books work very well. Pages cannot be removed or added without being very obvious.

Lined pages make them easy to write in. ▶▶

Now What to Use !



Documentation !

- The second book you will need is a loose-leaf notebook. This is where you will place all the following; anything and everything that you are given regarding the child
- 1. doctor's visit slips,
- 2. school records, notes from the teacher, etc.
- 3. immunization records, etc.

I personally recommend that you place all receipts for the month in this notebook too.

PURPOSE:

This will help re-establish your schedule for any day of the month if need be. If not the actual receipts then copies of them or a list of the receipts for each month. Or you can set up files in a file cabinet for each month and put the receipts in this file.

Need a professional look?

Try using a View binder
The front clear overlay allows for a custom cover design.



Scenario #3 !



You have taken your foster children to play at the Lincoln Memorial Park. It is Saturday and a beautiful sunny day. Annette is playing on the merry-go-round and suddenly falls to the ground.



Scenario #3

She is crying and you run to her as fast as you can. All the other children gather round her. When you reach her you notice that her hands are skinned up as well as her knee.

Mr. Al Smith, the school counselor, is at the park with his Boy Scout Troop. He has a first aid kit in the car and carries Annette over to the car so he can take a look and clean up the wounds.

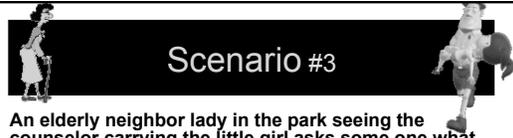


Scenario #3

An elderly neighbor lady in the park seeing the counselor carrying the little girl asks some one what happened. The reply was that they didn't really know but it was something about her mom pushing her down or dropping her or something.

The lady calls the report in to the police and informs them of the mom's address.

Later that day , when she comes home with Annette the police are waiting at her house with CPS and ask her to come down to the station.



Documentation

Now we are going to document all three of these incidents.

- We are going to learn how to do this properly.
- Let's go back to **SCENARIO #1**.
- What can you remember about this first incident ?

Documentation

Scenario #1. What, you say you don't REMEMBER?

DON'T be surprised to find out how little you remember about this first incident?

About 90% of people viewing this for the first time will be in the same position.

Documentation

Point of exercise:

If you cannot remember a scenario that we set up a few minutes ago, how are you going to remember it after three months or even six months have passed?

- **OK, now we understand why it is SOOOOOO important to document every incident that takes place in your foster care home.**

Documentation !

- OK, now that we've put this "Oh, I'll remember..." kind of thinking aside ! You understand that memory is not a totally reliable tool and why it is so vitally important to document **every incident** that takes place in and outside of your foster care home.

No matter how small the incident is, no matter how insignificant it seems to be at the time, months from now someone may ask a question, or call in an allegation involving this very incident !

Documentation !

- NOTE
- *If you have not documented this* incident, it appears that you did not know it happened or your portraying that it never happened. Then someone calls you on it and now you have to prove your side of this scenario.



- This is called an allegation.

Documentation

OK, now do we understand why it is SOOOOO important to document **every incident** that takes place in your foster home ?

So, the first thing we've learned today is not to put off writing down any incident in our journals.

NEVER, RELY on MEMORY.



Scenario #1 (Review)

- Your foster daughter is playing on the floor of the kitchen while you are fixing dinner.
- She is eleven months old. She has her favorite toy, pie pans, and is banging them together.
- The gravy spoon drops to the floor splashing the baby with hot gravy.



RECORD ALL !

- **Documentation means to keep a journal of all incidents in your home.**
- **Get in the habit of daily writing down incidents that took place that day.**
- **DO THIS EVERY DAY.....**
- Even if nothing notable happened that day except the UPS delivery guy came by, or the postman brought a letter from your brother. **Write it down....** These things will help trigger memories and re-establish your day if need be.

EXAMPLE Journal Entry !

• **DATE 3/21/06 5:56 PM**

• Sheila (the baby) was playing on the floor in the kitchen while I was fixing dinner. I accidentally dropped the spoon that I was using to stir the gravy with. It had some gravy on it and splashed the baby as it hit the floor. I immediately rushed to pick up the baby to check her and saw no indications of a burn or any problem.

What is wrong with this note?

- #1. Who are you to make the determination of no evidence of a burn?
- #2. Why was the baby in the kitchen within range of the cooking surface while you were stirring the gravy?

This is a safety violation on your part. You should have known that.
- #3. The baby should have been in a play pen far enough away from the range that this incident should never have happened.

Documentation

- You have just learned lesson number 2.
 - These are the questions your social worker will ask you when you report this incident to him/her.
 - Or by the investigator when an allegation is filed against you. (Like when the biological mother sees the burn on the babies arm). 
- As Foster Parents we are not allowed the privilege of making mistakes.**
Our mistakes are called **RULE VIOLATIONS** and can result in having our license revoked.
Now here are the correct steps to take...

Documentation !

- # . **Take the baby to the emergency room to have her checked by a physician !**
Remember when you do this the doctor is a **mandatory reporter**, which means if he suspects child abuse he/she has to report this incident to CPS. This means that you will have an investigation conducted into this incident. 
- Now it is an allegation.....!** 
- Get a copy of the doctor's exam with his findings **clearly stated** and make sure the time and date is clearly evident on your copy. This goes into the child's loose-leaf notebook.

Remember the Rule Violations !

- 1. We already told you that it is a rule violation for the baby to be in the kitchen while you are cooking.
- 2. It is also a rule violation for Uncle Joe to stop by your home if he has not been cleared to do so. If they are frequent visitors to you home you need clearance.
- 3. It is also a rule violation for you not to carry a first aid kit in the car with you at all times. Notice that the school counselor had a first aid kit in his car.

Scenario #1

Your journal should have also recorded if any person happened to drop by your home the same evening that this incident took place.

- Didn't think that was important did you?
 - 1. Can you remember who that was?
 - 2. What time was it when this person stopped by? (Another prompt to trigger memory).
 - 3. What date did this happen ?
- This should all be documented in your journal.

LESSONS LEARNED !

It's better to learn these lessons now than later on the hard way....



When an allegation is filed against you.

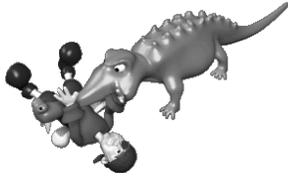
The Allegator is coming

- When you become a foster parent you become a willing passenger on the "Allegation Express".
- Don't go in half blind!



The Allegator is coming

Before you find yourself or a member of your family in the mouth of the alligator
Called
"ALLEGATIONS"



Our Job is to Educate YOU !

If you are charged with criminal charges under criminal law in this country you will then be under the Criminal Justice System in a Constitutional Court with very specific rules of evidence.

However, with allegations you are not Dealing with a Constitutional Court.

As a foster parent, you are under Administrative law and a different set of rules!

This is not law at all but a set of rules and regulations.

Our JOB is to EDUCATE YOU !

Approach all allegations with this mindset

- 1. YOU ARE GUILTY UNTIL PROVEN INNOCENT
- 2. YOU HAVE TO DO THE PROVING OF YOUR INNOCENCE.

No one is going to do that for you !
 Not your agency nor your social worker.
 Further, your attorney can only prove your innocence equipped with the proof, ammunition and information that only you were able to provide to him/her to do so. The burden of proof lies with you.

When you have an allegation filed these people are not even allowed to talk to you.....

You have been accused of CHILD ABUSE, and NOW you are the **enemy**

Our JOB is to EDUCATE YOU !

This is serious and we want you to learn the proper way to document to protect yourself and your family from some of the dangers you will face as a foster parent.

Nothing can totally stop allegations, but our job is to prepare you for the on-coming storm called allegations.

Be PREPARED FOR the Battle





At the Police Station !

(Do you even remember scenario #3)?

- Questions come flying at you about scenario #3.
 - Why did you push your foster daughter?
 - Were you angry at her ?
 - Why didn' t you take her to the emergency room?
 - Don' t you realize how dangerous the play ground equipment can be?

At the Police Station !

- What was the name of the park ?
- Who was with you at the time of the incident?
- What day was it?
- Was it raining that day?
- Were there many children at the park that day?

Could you answer any of these questions?

At the Police Station !

Most of us could not ?

Your personal journal should have recorded:

1. The involved child' s name.
2. The date of the incident.
3. The time.
4. Who was present at the time of the accident. Names of those present. If possible a signed statement from that person in your loose leaf notebook for documentation.....
5. A doctor' s exam slip if there is one.....

Those present !

- At the time of this incident Mr. Al Smith who happens to be the school counselor and a Boy Scout leader was at the park. He offered his first aid skills in first aid for Annette's skinned knee. He cleaned the wound and covered with bandage from the first aid kit that he always carried in his car.
- REMEMBER...he is an eye witness to the incident.
- He can verify that you were not close enough to push Annette off the merry-go-round.
- No matter what your neighbor said when she reported that you pushed Annette off the merry-go-round.

End of POLICE STATION

- You might have remembered that Mr. Smith was there at the park that day.
- But, would you have remembered the Boy Scout Troop?
- This is why it is so important to learn to do this correctly and
DO IT EVERY DAY.....

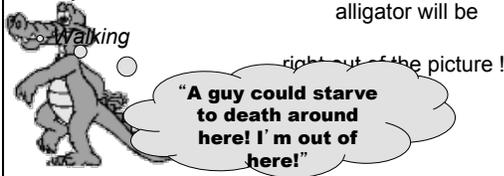
Our Job is to Educate YOU !

- We are not trying to scare you with our police station scenario . But you must be prepared for the **procedures that are common place** when a foster parent has an allegation filed on them.
- Understand that if the District Attorney feels he/she has sufficient evidence to file **criminal charges** of child abuse they will do so.



Documentation Pays off...

- **QUESTION:** IN the scenarios that we went through, do you think that allegations will be pursued?
- Or do you think your meticulous documentation has saved the day ?
- If you remembered to document I think this little alligator will be



Good Advice !

ABSOLUTE RULE:

- Never ever let anyone remove or borrow your journals, for any reason. Do not let them out of your view or give them to others to read (we all know this would be a violation of the privacy act).
- If you must have them with you to present as evidence **Make sure that you have** extra Xeroxed separate copies and make them available in a sealed envelope for anyone who is required to have them.





Thanks for your time! 

Download this from our website to share with other foster parents.

Foster Parents Legal Solutions
WE ARE YOUR SUPPORT SYSTEM
1-877-FPA-CHILD
