



RECORDING OF INFORMATION

The information on this sheet has been taken from an unsourced document which workers at the Youth Advocacy Centre have found useful in their work practice.

Recording accurate, complete and up-to-date information is important. Workers should keep in mind when recording information that the document may have to stand up to the scrutiny of a line manager, a solicitor or a court. The way a situation or a fact is phrased could put a particular slant on it and have serious consequences for the young person.

Below are some guidelines for proper and effective record keeping/report writing.

1. Record the source of the information.

“The teacher stated that the child had been frequently absent from school” rather than “The child has frequently been absent from school”.

2. Record accurately and objectively.

“John stated that because he was now working he was not able to attend his appointment” **rather than** “John refused to attend his appointment”.

3. Record facts, not personal opinions.

“Jane has difficulty with communication and may require a developmental assessment” **rather than** “Jane is a sullen child and isn’t very bright”.

4. Opinions must not be reported as facts when the writer is not an expert on the subject.

“Dr. Jones states that Michael has a psychiatric disorder” **not** “I think that Michael probably has a psychiatric disorder”.

The danger of personal opinions is that myths can develop around the person, for example, that a person is an ‘alcoholic’ because on occasions s/he has appeared intoxicated or smelt of alcohol.

5. Opinions should be recorded as such.

Opinions should be clearly separated from objective fact by, for example, using words such as “I think” or “I believe” or “it appears”. There should be some evidence to support this opinion.

6. Reasons for decisions must be recorded.

7. Observations and opinions that are not related to the management of the case should not be recorded.

“When a young man, the father of this child was convicted of possession of marijuana” should not be recorded.

8. Record information concisely.

Record the *minimum* of detail but the maximum of information necessary for the file to serve as an everyday working tool. Excessive detail conceals important information in the unimportant.

9. Use simple, everyday language wherever possible.

Avoid jargon so that the information can be readily understood by those who have a legitimate reason to have access to it.