

- ◆ Authorization forms for transportation and field trips
- ◆ Authorization for emergency medical care (medical consent form), and
- ◆ Names, telephone numbers, and addresses for those persons authorized to take the child from the center.

It is important that all required forms and paperwork are completed before the child enters your program.

You are required to file written Medication Authorization forms and Accident/Incident reports in each child's file. This lets you see at a glance whether a particular child has a pattern of frequent accidents or illnesses.

Some records must travel with children when they leave the premises, for example, emergency medical consent forms. You might want to have parents sign two emergency medical consent forms when they enroll their child, one on a full-sized sheet of paper to be kept on file at the center, and one on an index card to be carried along with the child when he or she is away from the center. The index card can also contain other information you want to have available if there is an emergency, such as:

- ◆ Parents' work numbers
- ◆ Emergency contact information
- ◆ Doctor and dentist information
- ◆ Important facts from the child's medical history, such as allergies, medicines to which the child is allergic, and serious illnesses.

You are also required to keep written documentation that you have informed parents of their child's individual progress (WAC 170-295-2080) in each child's file. This may include a signed statement that parents have received written observations or assessments about their child, reviewed a child's portfolio, or attended a parent-teacher conference.

Note: Even if it is not required, it is wise to keep notes on any significant events, important phone conversations, or parent discussions you may have.

How Long Should You Keep Records?

It is important to keep past records and documents for your benefit as well as to meet licensing requirements. The following WACs tell you how long you need to keep specific records:

- ◆ Snack menus (WAC 170-295-3160) must be kept on file for at least six months
- ◆ Attendance records and DSHS invoices (WAC 170-295-7030) for children receiving subsidy must be kept on file for 5 years
- ◆ Children's files and immunization records (WAC 170-295-7010) must be kept on-site for one year after the child leaves the program
- ◆ Fire drill records (WAC 170-295-5030) must be kept on file for the current year plus the previous calendar year, and
- ◆ Daily schedules and lesson plans (WAC 170-295-2010) must be kept for six months.

Be sure to check with your accountant or tax advisor regarding other records they may want you to keep (for example they may want you to keep attendance, meal records, or business documents for several years).

You may also need to keep records from other agencies such as your food program or Labor and Industries. Please check with the agencies directly regarding their requirements.

In the long run, documentation is for your protection and to help you plan and run your program, not just to satisfy licensing requirements.