



FACT SHEET

Health Access for Independent Living (HAIL)

Organizing Your Health Records

Why It's Important for People with Disabilities to Organize Their Health Records

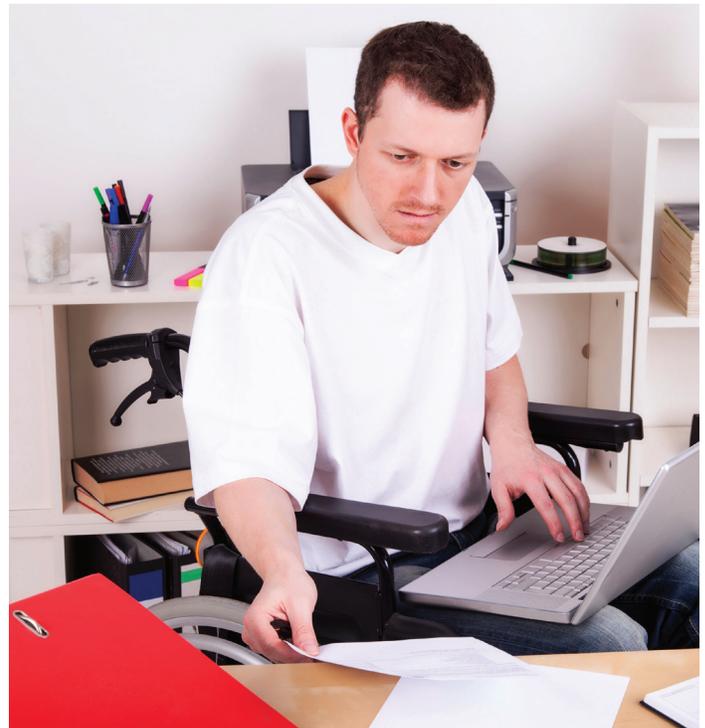
Having your health records clearly organized helps you and your doctor make informed health decisions. (When we refer to “your doctor,” this includes other health care professionals you work with, such as a nurse, physical therapist or other provider.) Being able to review these records can help you monitor your health over time. Other benefits to having your information easy to find:

- If you get a second opinion, you can make sure the same tests are not performed again. This can save time, effort and money.
- Organized records help you remember important information when you fill out forms at your doctor’s office.

This fact sheet offers tips on what records to keep and how to organize the information.

How to Stay Organized

- Keep the original copies of instructions, lab tests or other items that your doctor gives you. You can write down your own notes about a visit or test as well.
- Look through notes and reports that the doctor gives you. This will help you check what you thought you heard with what your doctor actually said.
- Keep contact information, medication lists, and dates of doctor/hospital visits.
- Use a binder, notebook or file folder for your



information. Use dividers and labels to keep the information organized in whatever way makes the most sense to you.

- If you like to keep records on a computer, you can scan your records and bills, and create a list of what you have.
- Remember to take your notebook to all medical appointments and update it with any new information.

Your Personal and Family History

Though we often remember certain events or illnesses very clearly, it helps to keep a written record over the years of your personal health history. Your family history can be important to understanding your

Keep your medical records in a binder, notebook or file folder. Use dividers to organize the information in a way that makes sense to you.



own risks for other conditions. Record these items:

- History of illnesses, surgeries or tests, hospitalizations, and chronic medical conditions
- Dates for the above (to the best of your ability)
- For women: Information about any pregnancies/births
- Types of different conditions, diseases, and causes of deaths due to illness among your immediate family members (parents, siblings, grandparents)

Benefits of a Having a Medical Home

A “medical home” is not a building, but a way to receive comprehensive, coordinated health care. In most cases, your primary care doctor serves as your medical home. Your medical home team should work with you to coordinate and keep track of your health and health care services.

Ideally, you can keep an ongoing relationship with a physician through all stages of your adult life: acute care, chronic care, preventive services and end of life care. If you have to move or change doctors, look for another primary care physician or medical practice that will make sure your medical needs are met. Ask your friends or other people for recommendations.

You can help your provider see the “big picture” of your health in these ways:

- Request to have all medical records or test results from specialists sent to your primary care doctor.
- Inform your doctor of any alternative therapies you have taken to improve your health, such as dietary supplements or acupuncture.

How to Get Copies of Your Medical Records

- Request copies of your medical records from the front desk at your health care provider’s office. (This could require filling out a form.) Some medical offices and hospitals now have online records that you can access.
- Request all information including doctor consultation reports, hospital discharge summaries, lab results, X-rays, test results, and screening and diagnostic procedures.
- If this seems like too much work, try focusing most of your effort on records regarding conditions that have the most impact on your personal health – for example, diabetes-related records, or medications used to relieve migraines.
- Find out if your medical reports and records can be stored securely online for easy transfer to your primary health care provider if needed. (You may need to sign a form.)

Records of Bills and Payments

You can also keep a section in your notebook or a separate file to record medical bills and payments. This will help you have the right information at hand if you have questions for your medical provider or health coverage provider.

Other HAIL Fact Sheets

- For information about preventive screenings and exams and immunization schedules, see our fact sheet “Accessing Preventive Care.”
- For medication and allergy lists to maintain, see “Managing Your Medications.”
- See “Understanding Your Health Care Coverage” for information about Medicaid and private insurance.

Resources

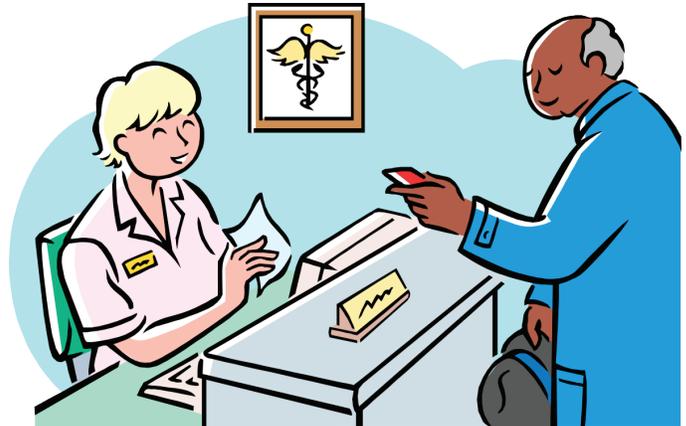
This book walks you through the specific steps of creating a health record binder: Savard, M. (2000). *The Savard Health Record: A Six-Step System for Managing Your Health Care*, Time-Life Books.

HRSA “What is a medical home? Why is it important?” - <http://www.hrsa.gov/healthit/toolbox/Childrenstoolbox/BuildingMedicalHome/whyimportant.html>

Seattle Children’s Hospital “Build a Care Organizer for Your Child” - <http://cshcn.org/planning-record-keeping/care-notebook>

WebMD “Organizing Your Medical Records” - <http://www.webmd.com/health-insurance/tc/home-medical-records-overview?page=2>

In most cases, your primary care doctor serves as your medical home. You can work with your medical home staff to keep track of all your health records.



This fact sheet is for informational purposes and is not meant to take the place of health care services you may need. Please see your health care provider about any health concerns.

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Produced by:

KU RESEARCH & TRAINING CENTER ON INDEPENDENT LIVING
Life Span Institute

Research and Training Center on Independent Living
The University of Kansas
Rm. 4089, 1000 Sunnyside Ave.
Lawrence, KS 66045-7561
Ph 785-864-4095
TTY 785-864-0706
rtcil@ku.edu
www.rtcil.org/cl

Project Staff

Jean Ann Summers, PhD

Dot Nary, PhD

Aruna Subramaniam, MS

E (Alice) Zhang, MEd, MA