

THE WORKPLACE LITERACY PROJECT



Writing objective progress notes - workbook

Last revised 16 May 2017





About the program

This training program is an action from the Tasmanian Disability Sector Language, Literacy and Numeracy Skills Action Plan 2016 - 2017.

The aim is to train support workers and team leaders with the skills to write objectively.

This program involves a one-hour, team-based training session.

Session objectives

At the end of this session you will be able to:

- Define objective writing
- Recognise the benefits of objective writing
- Identify when to write objectively
- Write objectively appropriate to workplace documents

Note

We use the term “progress notes” to refer to the documents created by support workers at the end of a shift. The term you use might be different from this, but the meaning will be similar. Other terms you might use are:

- Daily notes
- Shift reports
- Communication notes

Why do we write progress notes?

The purpose of writing progress notes is:

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Why?

Who reads the progress notes?

The progress notes will be read and used by:

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Who?

What is done with the information in progress notes?

How is the information used? What actions are taken based on the information?

The information in progress notes is used to:

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Why?

What information needs to be reported in progress notes?

The information we need to include in progress notes is:

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What?

Definitions

Objective writing

Objective writing is based on facts and observations. It is a description of what actually happened.

Ask yourself what did you:

- Hear?
- Say?
- See?
- Do?

Objective writing is not influenced by personal feelings or opinions.

Example of objective writing

At 3.30 pm Marcella returned from a walk to Albert Street Park and she was holding her right arm against her body. I noticed that she had a graze and bruise on her right arm. Marcella said a dog had jumped on her when she was sitting on the grass at the park. She said she had been frightened and that her arm was sore.



Subjective writing

Subjective writing is based on or influenced by the writer's point of view, emotions, assumptions, speculation, judgement or interpretations.

We are often subjective.

Example subjective writing

Marcella must have bumped into something when she went on a walk to Albert Street Park, as she has grazed skin and a bruise on her arm. She was holding her arm and looked unhappy.



Be aware of objective and subjective writing

1. Sort out the objective cards from the subjective cards.
2. Match each objective card with the subjective card that best reflects possible interpretations for the behaviour. This can be based on your professional judgement, personal views and past experiences.
3. Did all the groups pair the cards in the same way? Discuss the different ways that objective behaviour can be interpreted. The objective behaviour could indicate any one of the subjective descriptions.
4. Can you see that writing subjectively might not present an accurate account of what really happened?

Activity

Benefits of writing objectively

The benefits of writing objectively are:

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Getting started

For progress notes think about:

- Why you're writing the document
- Who will read it
- What they will do with the information
- The goals in the person's plan
- Any specific things that the person's team need information about
- The order in which things happened (chronologically)
- Highlights or significant details of the shift
- What actually happened:
 - What did the person say? How did they communicate this?
 - What did the person do?

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Important

Writing objectively doesn't mean that you can't write about emotions or interpretations. But first, you need to explain in your report what was said and what you observed. Then you can then say, "I interpreted this to mean that the person was feeling ..."

This might be necessary in order to explain the actions you then took, or the kinds of supports you provided.



See the last two pages of this workbook for some further information about:

- Reporting active support
- Responding to and reporting behaviours of concern

You can put these in an area where you write your progress notes, and use them as memory joggers.



Guidelines for writing objectively

Your workplace might provide examples of your workplace documents during induction. Guidelines are sometimes also provided in relevant policies and procedures.

Does your workplace have any existing guidelines for writing objectively? Where can you find them?

Be factual

Ask yourself the following questions as a prompt to include all the required information.

- Who was involved?
- What happened?
- Where did it happen?
- When did it happen?
- What did they say, what did you hear?
- What did they do, what did you see?
- What did you do, what did you say?

Reporting things you read or heard

- Did someone else tell me something, and I think I should record it?

For example, during the evening shift, you found Nomara crying in her room. When writing your progress notes, you want to include information passed on from the support worker who went with her to the community garden. Your report includes:

Nomara had a good morning at the community garden. She planted seedlings and ate some veggies.



The support worker who took Nomara to the community garden reported that she was active all morning. She planted seedlings and picked some ripe tomatoes and ate them.



Be accurate and specific

Think about the information that all the readers need to get from your report. Include enough detail for them to fulfil their role in the person's team.

The person was hot, and had a high temperature in the afternoon.



The person's said they felt hot. Their temperature was 39° at 3pm.





Be logical

Include the information in a chronological order.



Re-read and edit subjective statements to become objective statements

Re-read your report and check that you have only reported the facts. Ask yourself, does this include anything I:

- Heard or read somewhere else?
- Assumed?
- Interpreted?
- Made a judgement about?

Edit the document to remove the subjective statements and replace with objective statements.

Henry was upset and accused Tamara of taking his phone. I made him sit on the chair while I sorted it out.



Henry raised his voice and pushed Tamara. He said, 'She took my phone and hid it'. I asked Henry to sit in the chair while I talked to Tamara. I asked Tamara if she had the phone. She said 'No, I didn't touch it'. She pointed to the table next to the chair.



Practice writing objective progress notes

Write objective progress notes about your last shift.

For progress notes think about:

- Why you're writing the document
- Who will read it
- What they will do with the information
- The goals in the person's plan
- The order in which things happened (chronologically)
- Highlights or significant details of the shift
- Any specific things that the person's team need information about
- Is it fact? Did it definitely happen, what did you hear, say, do or observe?

Also, see if you can:

- Identify other sources of information
- Be accurate and specific
- Change subjective statements to be objective
- Be logical

Don't forget to use the resources on the last two pages of this booklet if you can.

Reporting active support

When you are reporting on the types of active support provided, explain the graded assistance that was given during each activity.

- **Verbal cues** – you asked or invited the person to be involved
- **Visual cues** – you set the scene so that the person could see what activity you were offering them
- **Step-by-step instructions** – you gave the person clear and simple prompts at each stage of the activity
- **Sign and gesture** – you moved your hands, arms, body or face to communicate an idea
- **Show** – you did the same activity next to the person so they could copy you
- **Physical assistance** – you provided some physical assistance to enable the person to complete part of a task
- **Hand over hand assistance** – you placed your hand over a person's hand to help them carry out a task
- **Visual aids** – you showed a person a picture or object to support them to make a choice
- **Adaptive equipment** – the person used equipment to strengthen their physical or communication capabilities

For example: Nugget made a zucchini cake. He followed step-by-step instructions. Physical assistance was provided to pick the zucchini from the garden, use the electric beater, put the cake in the oven, and remove it from the oven. He carried out measuring and mixing independently.

Australian Government Department of Industry. (2015). 'Every moment has potential: Module 3'. Retrieved, February 2017, from <http://www.activesupportresource.net.au/module-3.html>

Responding to and reporting behaviours of concern

Common misinterpretations of behaviour	Examples of alternative interpretations
<p>Attention seeking The person follows staff or family members around the house, touch others inappropriately, attempts to pass objects at seemingly inappropriate times, teases others, interrupt others or act in a way that is found to be annoying.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiating relationships – they want friends • Seeking company – they are lonely • Seeking reassurance – they are scared • Seeking help or support – they lack skills or confidence • Personality issues
<p>Self-stimulating The person rocks, twists or plays with their fingers and toes; slaps their face or their legs persistently; twirls around; pokes at their eyes; hums or signs inappropriately.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bored, overwhelmed or over stimulated and may need to calm • Unable to identify or initiate an alternative activity • Syndrome specific behaviours, possibly related to neurological problems • Health and medical needs
<p>Self-injuring The person picks at their skin, cuts themselves with sharp objects, places objects in their body cavities, pulls their hair out, eats or drinks to excess.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nervous • Anxious • Depressed • Psychiatric issues • Bored/Boredom
<p>Non-compliant The person does not do things as they are asked to do them, when they are asked, or does not finish things they start.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not interested • Not understanding • Not being asked the right way • Not having sufficient skills • Not having sufficient stamina (tired) • Recalling bad memories of a past experience
<p>Disruptive The person talks or makes noises at inappropriate times, yells, interferes with the work or activities of others or break things.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frightened • Scared • Stressed • Lacking understanding of the situation
<p>Aggressive The person throws objects or hit out at others.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not knowing what is expected of them • Frustrated or even threatened • The requirements of the current situation exceed their skill or level of tolerance • Other attempts to communicate are not responded to

Department of Human Services, Victoria. (20009). Positive behaviour support - Getting it right from the start: Facilitators reference manual V2. Retrieved, February 2017, from: <http://www.yumpu.com/en/document/view/24328830/positive-behaviour-support-getting-it-right-from-the-start/1>