

The Power of Getting Organized – Do it Right!

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By Wrightslaw

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Last week on the [Community Helpline](#), Kim asked “*Should a child’s special education file include copies of all evaluations and reports, especially those requested for annual review?*”

Sharon answered: “*Your child’s record at the school district has to be a complete history of your child’s journey through special ed.*”

A complete history – yikes! **How do you accomplish that?**

Nina emailed she made it her summer project last year... “*I organized all the documents I have into a chronological file as you suggest in [From Emotions to Advocacy](#)—it took months and is in 3 gigantic binders!—but I have already had occasion to find things there several times. There were documents in there that I had totally forgotten I had.*”

Congratulations, Nina, on organizing the file. Most parents have the same reaction you describe – “I’d forgotten all about that!”

It’s hard for people to get started but it pays off! You need a simple, foolproof document management system.

The special education system generates mountains of paper. If you don’t have a file for your child, it is time to create one. If you have already started a file, it’s time to review the file. If it is not complete, begin now.

Wrightslaw has created a parent-tested system for tracking your child’s educational history and a method for quickly locating any document in your child’s file. You can:

- learn the specific steps for organizing the file
- get helpful tips
- download a sample Master Document List

Read [Organizing Your Child’s Special Education File](#) at <http://www.fetaweb.com/03/organize.file.htm>.

Here are the first steps.

- 1. Gather Information About Your Child**
- 2. Make a Master Provider List**
- 3. Organize the Master File**

4. Create Your Document List

Remember these rules:

- Do not write on your original documents.
- Do not use a marker or highlighter on your original documents.
- Do not release your original documents to anyone.
- Keep your notebook current.

When you take your organized file to the next school meeting, you will understand the power of getting organized. You will gain a sense of control.

If you need to ask an attorney's advice, the first thing she will want to do is review your child's file. If you have organized the file correctly, your attorney will be able understand your child's history by seeing the development step by step.