

## Writing SIRs

Writing SIRs is a form of technical writing – the purpose of the incident report is to inform others of key information. The information contained in an incident report helps other agencies determine the appropriate follow-up for a consumer.

There are ways you can ensure that your incident report is informative:

- Know your audience. In the case of SIRs, the person writing the report must assume that the person receiving the SIR does not know the consumer or the consumer's history. Imagine your reading audience as a blank slate. Remember that, within the regional center, your information will be disseminated to many more people than the Service Coordinator. Include all relevant information, but be as concise as possible. Create a written report that is factual and free of a lot of the extraneous observations or characterizations. Include verbatim reporting when it is appropriate. For example, "When I asked Joey what was wrong, he said, 'Jane hit me!'"
- Organize your material. Organize information into logical (i.e., chronological, functional, etc.) categories.
- Make your document easy to read. This is especially important if you are not using RCOC's vendor SIR form. Does your form have lines so small that it is difficult for staff to write in the space provided? Does the formatting of your form follow the flow of information? Does your form contain all of the elements required by Title 17? **If you writing a report by hand, print instead of using cursive.**
- Test your work. After you have written the report, read it. Follow the train of thought for yourself to make sure your work is clear and succinct. Make sure the information you have given is factually correct. Head off any commonly found confusing scenarios, such as multiple pronoun usage for an incident involving multiple consumers ("he said that she said...", "then he said..."). Is the UCI# correct?

### Grammar/Spelling/Punctuation:

1. Spell out first and last names in the report, especially yours. After a name has been spelled out the first time it appears in the text, the party can then be referred to as "Mr. White," "Ms. Black," "Dr. Plum," etc.
2. Try to avoid acronyms that are unique to your agency. For example, "PA," could mean "Program Assistant," "Personal Assistant," "Personal Aide," "Program Aide," or something else. If you are using an acronym that is specific to your agency, it should be spelled out the first time it appears in the text, with the acronym immediately following in parentheses. Thereafter, use the acronym

only. For example, “Independent Living Skills (ILS)” the first time, then “ILS” all subsequent times, or “QMRP Adams.”

3. If a particular section of the SIR is not applicable at the time of its writing, write in “N/A,” or if the information is unknown, write that in.

Thoroughness:

1. Do not leave any blank areas on the form (see number 3, above).
2. To the extent possible, check off only one type of incident.
3. When writing the site of incident, use “consumer’s home” or “parent’s home” rather than the actual address. If it occurred at an intersection, name the streets and the city. If it occurred at a restaurant/place of business, note the name and the city (if known).

When writing the description of incident, include any antecedents noted.

Be as descriptive as possible. For example, say, “While our group was at the bus stop in front of the Orange Mall” instead of saying, “While out in the community.”

4. If you run out of room in one section of the report, attach a page. If you try to squeeze in extra sentences or words along the margins, you run the risk of having that information cut off by the fax machine or being written so small that it is impossible to read.
5. For other agencies involved, APS, CPS, Ombudsman, and/or law enforcement **must** be checked off for allegation of abuse/neglect. An incident report should not be submitted until the appropriate investigating agency has been contacted.
6. For medication errors, your report must list which medications were missed, the prescribed dosages, and the dates missed. For example:
  - “Dilantin 200 mg TID;” if the Dilantin was missed from 1/2/08 through 1/5/08, then the “Date of Incident” field should state, “1/2/08—1/5/08.”
  - “Claritin 10 mg HS;” if the Claritin was missed only on one date, then that is the date that is written in the “Date of Incident” field.
7. Ensure that you both **print** and **sign** your name at the end of the report.