

Letter of Intent

What is the Letter of Intent?

Simply put the letter of intent is a document written by you (the parents or guardian) or other family members that describes your son's or daughter's history, his or her current status, and what you hope for your child in the future. You would be wise to write this letter today and add to it as the years go by, updating it when information about your son or daughter changes. To the maximum extent possible, it is also a good idea to involve your child in the writing of this letter, so that the letter truly represents your child.

The letter is then ready at any moment to be used by all the individuals who will be involved in caring for your son or daughter should you become ill or disabled yourself, or when you die. Even though the letter of intent is not a legal document, the courts and others can rely upon the letter for guidance in understanding your son or daughter, and following your wishes. In this way, you can continue to speak out on behalf of your son or daughter, providing insight and knowledge about his or her own best possible care.

Important Points to Remember When Writing The Letter of Intent

- Involve your son or daughter as much as possible when writing this letter. You as a parent are the best judge as to how much your son or daughter can be involved in the writing of this letter.
- Involve all other individuals, brothers, sisters, church members or other relatives who are critical to the care of your son or daughter with a disability.
- The contents of your letter should reflect your expectations. Future circumstances may make it difficult for others to carry out strict demands for your son or daughter with a

disability. You must trust that those carrying out your plan will try to adhere to your expectations.

- You should gear the preferences in the letter toward enhancing your son or daughter's independence and growth. Your requests should not be for the convenience of other family member or service providers.
- The letter should be written in non-technical terms/language by the parents. It should reflect your heartfelt desires for your son or daughter.
- A letter of intent is not a legally binding like a will. However, its contents should not contradict your other legal documents.
- It is of the utmost importance that you periodically update this letter as well as your letter of last instruction as circumstances may change. Be sure it still reflects not only your expectations, but also the preferences of other family members but most importantly the preferences of your son or daughter with a disability. Age and changes in other circumstances may significantly alter what you want in the letter.
- Choose one special day each year to update the letter. For example: Your son or daughter's birthday, or the last day of school etc.
- Put the letter in an easily accessible place and clearly mark it.