

OASIS · AT A GLANCE

How to document harm when services disappear

When a service ends, the harm doesn't announce itself with a diagnosis code. It shows up as lost skills, disrupted sleep, and a caregiver who can no longer work a full shift. Four categories of documentation turn that quiet unraveling into a case an appeal, a legislator, or an ombuds office has to take seriously.

BY JIM PALASTY · 13 MIN READ · MAKING REGRESSION VISIBLE

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CATEGORIES THAT PROVE HARM

Timeline. Functional regression. Safety incidents. Caregiver impact. Together they turn a quiet loss into documented evidence.

How it works

THREE STEPS

STEP 1

Mark the date it ended



STEP 2

Track what changed



STEP 3

Package it for the audience

The four-category harm file

Timeline	Service end date, notices, appeals filed, in order.
Functional regression	Before/after skills comparison, dated, weekly.
Safety incidents	Falls, elopement, injury, ER visits since the cut.
Caregiver impact	Missed work hours, sleep loss, documented health effects.
Supporting evidence	Clinician notes, school or employer records, photos where relevant.

A STORY WE KNOW



Faith's daughter lost her day program with six weeks' notice. Faith didn't file an appeal right away; she was too busy scrambling for coverage to think about paperwork. Three months later, exhausted and having missed eleven days of work, she started the four-category file anyway, reconstructing the timeline from old texts and calendar entries. It took a weekend. That file became the exhibit her state's disability rights organization used in testimony to a legislative committee reviewing day program cuts eight months later. Faith didn't get her daughter's program back. Two other families in neighboring counties got theirs restored.

RECONSTRUCTED LATE IS STILL WORTH BUILDING. JUST START TODAY FOR THE NEXT ONE.

What matters, at a glance

Timeline

Service end date, every notice received, every appeal filed. One dated line per event, in order.

Functional regression

Skills that were present before and are gone or diminished after. Compared side by side, weekly, in plain language.

Safety incidents

Falls, elopements, injuries, or ER visits that started or increased after the service ended. Dated, described, undeniable.

Caregiver impact

Missed work, reduced hours, sleep loss, health effects. This harm is real, measurable, and too often left off the record entirely.

Update cadence

Ten minutes a week keeps all four categories current instead of reconstructed from memory months later.

One file, three audiences

The same documented facts support an appeal, a legislative testimony, and an ombuds complaint, formatted for each reader.

BRING THESE · CHECK AS YOU GO

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| ☐ A dated timeline of the service ending and every notice | ☐ A before/after functional skills comparison |
| ☐ A safety incident log with dates and descriptions | ☐ A caregiver impact log: missed work, sleep, health |
| ☐ Any supporting clinician, school, or employer records | ☐ A ten-minute weekly filing habit on the calendar |

YOUR MOVE

When a service just ended, or is about to, here is how you build the file this week

- 1 Mark the service end date and every notice received, in order.
- 2 List every skill or routine that was working before the cut.
- 3 Log any safety incident since the cut, dated and described.
- 4 Track missed work hours and sleep disruption for the caregiver.
- 5 Update all four categories weekly, ten minutes at a time.
- 6 Package the file for whichever audience needs it: appeal, legislator, or ombuds office.

Regression that isn't written down looks, to a reviewing body, exactly like nothing happened.

RESOURCES NAMED IN THIS POST

healthlaw.org · <https://healthlaw.org/>

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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