

Care Preference Plan

- A Care Preference Plan is a powerful tool that allows families of children with special needs/disabilities to quickly and succinctly share information others need in order to know to understand how to best interact with the child. This knowledge will help their interactions go as smoothly as possible. It is
 - Family-driven
 - Person-centered
 - Strengths-based
 - Focused on problem-solving
 - Educational
- Multiple Care Preferences Plans can be created for the different situations the child may experience challenges in such as
 - Medical (emergency room, hospital, clinic)
 - Childcare
 - Academic
 - Recreational/social
 - Camps
 - Clubs
 - Sports teams
 - Religious organizations
 - Family/friends
- Care Preference Planning was developed by Katie Sullenbrand, the mother of a girl with a variety of physical and mental health care needs. Katie's daughter frequently experienced challenges in medical settings that her mom knew could be reduced or even avoided if the medical staff knew more about her daughter's preferences. As a nurse, Katie knew that staff were well trained in ways to connect to children and were doing their best to connect to her daughter. However, these methods were not effective with her daughter and were often unhelpful or even overwhelming for her. Katie wanted to find a way to quickly share some tips for how to work most effectively with her daughter and developed her daughter's first Care Preference Plan to do so.
- A Care Preference Plan is a great STARTING POINT for getting to know a child's preferences. It DOES NOT replace getting to know the child and family because it doesn't share everything that can be done to help interactions go smoothly and it is tailored to the specific situation it was created for.
- It can be done collaboratively with a family, by the family, or independently and shared. The child it is created for may choose to participate or not.
- Completing a Care Preference Plan can help a family summarize their thoughts on what their child needs for an interaction to be successful, allowing them to be more focused on their primary goals for the interaction and how to best achieve them even if they don't share the Care Preference Plan with the person the child will be interacting with.

Suggestions for Inclusion in a Care Preference Plan

- An introductory section with
 - A picture of the child
 - A description of the child's special needs/disabilities as is appropriate to the situation the Care Preference Plan is created for
 - A statement of appreciating the recipient partnering with the child/family and how their doing so will help this and future similar situations go more smoothly
 - An explanation of which situations that may arise in their interactions with the child are particularly difficult or triggering to the child
- A list of ways the recipient can help
 - What they should try not to do (Please Do Not), including specific examples of what they can do instead
 - What they should try to do (Please Do), including specific suggestions
- A statement of gratitude for the recipient's role in the child's life
- An explanation of why the child may have some of the reactions they have
- A statement that if the recipient is interested in learning more about the rationale behind the family's requests they should see the reverse side of the Care Preference Plan
- The reverse side
 - explains each
 - Please Do and how it will help
 - Please Do Not and why each is challenging for the child and what they can do instead (if not already on the front side)
 - Includes a summary statement about how following these requests will help
 - Ends with a thank you for the recipient's commitment to working with the child and family