



A Guide for Caregivers: Why Every Special Needs Family Needs a Letter of Intent

Imagine you're writing a super important guidebook about your loved one—like a treasure map that tells others how to take care of them the way you do. This special guidebook would include all the things that make them happy, safe, and comfortable. That's exactly what a Letter of Intent does!

A Letter of Intent (LOI) is a document written by parents or caregivers of a person with special needs. It's not a legal paper like a will or trust, but it's just as important because it explains everything about your loved one's daily life, their needs, and their future wishes. Let's explore why having a Letter of Intent is so important!

What Is a Letter of Intent?

A Letter of Intent is like a roadmap for the future. It tells future caregivers, family members, or guardians all the details about your loved one's life—things only you would know!

It's not just about medical needs—it also includes things that make them happy, comfortable, and feel safe.

Even though it's not a legal document, lawyers recommend it as part of special needs planning because it helps ensure your loved one gets the right care even when you're not around.

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Why Should You Have One?

Parents and caregivers often worry: "What happens if something happens to me?" That's why a Letter of Intent is a gift of love—it helps make sure your child or loved one is cared for in the best way possible.

Here's why you need one:

- Keeps Their Routine the Same – Change can be scary! A Letter of Intent helps new caregivers follow familiar routines so your loved one feels safe.
- Holds Important Information in One Place – Instead of searching for notes or memories, caregivers can find everything they need in one document.
- Ensures Their Voice is Heard – Your loved one may not be able to express everything on their own, but your Letter of Intent can do it for them.
- Guides Future Caregivers – Whether a family member or professional takes over, they will know exactly how to support, love, and care for your child.

What Goes Into a Letter of Intent?

A Letter of Intent can be as long or as short as you need it to be. You can update it anytime, and it should be easy to read and understand.

Here are some important sections to include:

Daily Routine

- What time do they wake up?
- Do they have a bedtime routine?
- What do they like to eat for breakfast, lunch, and dinner?

Example:

"Carla wakes up at 7:30 AM and likes to start her day with apple juice. She takes her morning medicine at 8:00 AM. She enjoys quiet time after breakfast and prefers playing with her puzzle before starting her day."

Medical & Health Information

- What medications do they take?
- Do they have allergies or health conditions?
- Who are their doctors and therapists?

Example:

"Jeremy is allergic to peanuts and has asthma. He sees Dr. Rodriguez every three months. He takes one asthma pill every morning and uses his inhaler when he plays outside too long."

Likes & Dislikes

- What makes them happy?
- What are their favorite TV shows, foods, or activities?
- What things should be avoided because they cause stress or anxiety?

Example:

"Monique loves watching SpongeBob and listening to Taylor Swift. She gets scared of loud noises and prefers quiet spaces. She dislikes vegetables, but she enjoys strawberries and yogurt."

Education & Work

- Do they attend school or a special program?
- What subjects or activities do they enjoy?
- Do they have a job or vocational program?

Example:

"Ethan goes to Greenfield High School and has a wonderful teacher named Ms. Carter. He loves art class but struggles with math. He wants to work in a pet store when he's older."

Family & Friends

- Who are their closest family members?
- Do they have best friends they love spending time with?
- Are there pets or neighbors they enjoy seeing?

Example:

"Lucas loves his big brother, Daniel, and always looks forward to Sunday movie nights with Grandma. He also adores his cat, Whiskers, and would be sad if he couldn't see her."

Financial & Legal Information

- Do they have a Special Needs Trust or an ABLE account?
- Who should handle their money?
- What benefits (SSI, Medicaid, etc.) do they receive?

Example:

"Olivia has a Special Needs Trust set up by her parents. If anything happens, Aunt Lisa will be the trustee. She receives SSI and Medicaid, so money should never be given directly to her, but instead handled through the trust."

How Often Should You Update It?

A Letter of Intent is a living document, which means it should be updated regularly! Anytime something changes—like new medications, a different school, or a new favorite activity—make sure to update the letter.

Tip: Set a reminder to review and update the letter every six months or at least once a year.

Final Thoughts: A Letter of Love

A Letter of Intent is more than just a document—it's a love letter to your child's future. It gives caregivers peace of mind and helps ensure your loved one continues to live a happy and fulfilling life even when you can't be there.

If you haven't written one yet, don't worry—it's never too late to start! Even writing a few pages with important details can make a huge difference.

Because no one knows your loved one like you do.