

Caregiver Advocacy Resource for Engagement (C.A.R.E.) Calendar

Purpose

The Caregiver Advocacy Resource for Engagement (C.A.R.E.) Calendar is a roadmap to help parents/caregivers navigate the child therapy process. The C.A.R.E. Calendar provides parents/caregivers with knowledge and tools to better support their child, engage with their child's clinicians and advocate for their child's needs. Parents/caregivers can use the resources to better understand what happens in therapy, what questions to ask, and how to get the most out of the child therapy experience. Clinicians themselves can use the C.A.R.E. Calendar as a tool for engagement with a child client and his/her parents/caregivers.

Flexibility

Each part of the C.A.R.E. Calendar resources can be used on its own or all together. For example, some may only use the monthly calendar to provide structure and a space for tracking behaviors. Others may simply read the supplements to learn more about a particular topic. Families and clinicians can choose the parts of the calendar that are most relevant to them.

Monthly Topics

1. Child Therapy & My Role as a Caregiver
2. Understanding Confidentiality
3. Being an Informed Caregiver
4. Understanding Assessment
5. Sharing Personal Information and Knowing Where It Goes
6. Telling My Caregiver Story
7. Assessment Feedback
8. Child Advocacy: Partnering with Your Child's Therapist
9. Tracking & Communicating Between Sessions
10. The Challenge of Advocacy & Overcoming Barriers
11. I'm Stressed, Too – What Do I Do? Caregiver Self-Care
12. Completion & Next Steps

[CLICK HERE TO DOWNLOAD C.A.R.E CALENDAR RESOURCES.](#)

What's Included

Monthly Calendar - Front

December 2017



Understanding Assessment

Month: _____ Year: _____

Instructions for Caregivers

- Jot down therapy appointment times and important events.
- Track your child's behaviors and moods using symbols or stickers.
- Use the back of this calendar to read the monthly topic, write down strengths, things to work on, and goals for the month.
- Look for the supplement for additional information about the monthly topic.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

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The front page of the C.A.R.E. Calendar provides daily spaces to document any appointments, important events or experiences that may impact the child. Parents/caregivers may also use the space to track moods and behaviors. Parents/caregivers can share this data with their clinician to better understand patterns and make informed decisions on behalf of the child.

Monthly Calendar – Back

Month 1

Child Therapy & My Role as a Caregiver

Understanding Therapy

- Therapy is for children who have, or may have mental health difficulties, trauma experiences, or life experiences that disrupt their thinking, mood, feelings, or ability to relate to others.
- Through talk or play, a therapist can help children understand and cope with difficult situations and experiences, teach strategies for managing stress, and offer the child and family tools to deal with negative thoughts and feelings and unhelpful behaviors.

Importance of Caregivers

- Your relationship with your child is special and unique. Children rely on this to feel supported, cared for, and understood, especially when they are struggling. This means you play a very important role in the healing process for your child.
- As the caregiver, it is best if you are available for and participate in the therapy sessions. This is especially true if you care for a younger child (0-6 years old), because younger kids depend on the caregiver more.
- You should be prepared to meet with the therapist individually and to be in a session with the therapist and your child together. When a caregiver participates in therapy sessions, there are more chances to understand and communicate about the difficulties that brought your child into therapy. There may also be more opportunities for healing.
- If you are not usually included in therapy sessions as caregiver, you are encouraged to advocate for yourself to become more consistently involved. You can do this by asking to participate in sessions

[Click here to learn more about Child Therapy and My Role as a Caregiver](#)

Strengths

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-
-

Things To Work On At Home

-
-
-

Therapy Goals

-
-
-



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The back of the Monthly Calendar page includes space to identify strengths, things to focus on at home, and goals for therapy. It also has one of 12 informational topics that explain the “ins and outs” of therapy. These include tips and ideas on how to support your child, understand what happens in therapy, and address your own stress!

Monthly Supplement

December 2017



Sharing Personal Information and Understanding Where it Goes

If you wonder where the information you share with the therapist goes and how it will be used, then **you are not alone**. This “wondering” can hold some caregivers back from being honest and open with their child’s therapist. Here are some tips that can make you more comfortable with being open to sharing personal information and knowing how your information may be used or added into the treatment process.

Three general rules of thumb:

1. The details you share are used to build a shared understanding of your child, to help create treatment goals, and to inform the always changing therapeutic process. The therapist is not asking questions to be pushy or nosy, but to help better understand your child’s experience.
2. Therapists are required by law to keep your information private and confidential (with some exceptions that most frequently tied to ensure the safety of the child and others. See month 2 for more information). Information is not shared with others outside your sessions without your permission and generally is kept in locked cabinets or encrypted electronic files.
3. Always remember - you can find out where information goes and how the therapist intends to use it by just asking the therapist!

These rules of thumb may be enough guidance for some caregivers, but you may still have questions about why the therapist is asking about you or wants to talk with other people in your child’s life. Here are some reasons and tips for how to respond when the therapist may be asking more about you or others than you may have expected.

- **If a therapist asks you about your personal experiences as a caregiver (about your childhood, your parenting style, stresses in your life, etc.), there is likely a clinical reason, and it may be relevant to the child’s treatment.** For example, your level of stress or the way your parents spoke to you may influence how you interact with your child. You have the right and are encouraged to ask the therapist why he/she is asking, especially if you feel uneasy or want to know more about why the questions are being asked. Here are some ways you could handle this:
 - This question feels personal. Can you tell me about how this helps you better understand or work with my child?
 - This question seems more related to me and my experience. How does this help you work with my child?
- **Your child’s therapist may want to speak with other individuals or professionals involved in your child’s life.** Talking with other providers like teachers, doctors, or other family members is common. The purpose is to help the therapist better understand your child from multiple viewpoints. If the therapist speaks with others, he/she may learn something new that could be a missing piece in understanding your child. The therapist could also help share a missing piece of information or offer advice about how to respond or manage emotions/actions. You (or the legal guardian) would need to sign a release of information for this discussion to take place (see month 3 for more information).

If you have questions about whom your therapist may speak to and why, you may consider asking these questions:

- Are there other people you will speak to about my child?
 - Can you help me understand why you would like to (or are required to) talk to the teacher, caseworker, lawyer, etc.?
 - What, if any, information about me do you discuss with others on my child’s therapy or service planning team?
- **If you, or your therapist, wants the therapist to speak to other providers, you have the right to ask the therapist to limit this discussion to only some topics.** For example, if your child has a sexual abuse history or you are going through a divorce and your child is having behavior difficulties in school, you may want the therapist to speak to the teacher. If you want to keep your child or family’s information private, you may ask the therapist to offer the teacher advice about how to manage the behavior problems, but request that the therapist keep the reasons your child may be having difficulties private.

The Monthly Supplement is an additional reading to provide greater detail about each monthly topic. It offers more in-depth information as well as related articles or websites. The supplements are optional for those who want to learn more about a certain topic.

Special Topics

Special Topic: Court Involved Youth*

**Please note, this information is written about youth whose care is monitored by the court. In other words, these youth and their families are involved in the child welfare system. This information may be different for youth who have gotten in trouble with the law. The courts they interact with are separate and are part of the juvenile justice system.*

There may be a time that your child's therapist is "subpoenaed" or requested by a judge's order to share information about your child and therapy to the court. By law, a **subpoena** (pronounced suh-pee-nah) requires the therapist to provide the court with information about the therapist's work with your child such as records and notes. It may also require the therapist to attend a court date and testify/speak in court. When this happens, the written records or testimony will be used to help the court/judge answer questions like the following:

- Where is the best place for this child to live?
- How has the trauma history impacted the child's emotions, behaviors, and/or development?
- What does this child need? Is a parent able to provide this support?

If the therapist is required to speak in court, he/she will be asked questions under oath about your child. The therapist may discuss your child's history, your child's time in therapy, and the therapist's recommendations. This is sometimes scary and uncomfortable for everyone involved. The therapist should speak with you and your child about what may happen before, during, and after court. If the therapist provides the court with records or information, you are encouraged to ask questions to better understand this process.

Your child's therapist going to court could have a big effect on the relationship between each of you. You or your child may have thoughts, concerns, or reactions to this. Discuss these with your child's therapist.

Who Asks A Therapist to Testify in Court?

- **State's Attorney (or Prosecutor):** This lawyer is acting on behalf of the State (that you live in) to make sure state laws are upheld and followed. The main job of this person is to represent state laws. If your child is involved in the child welfare system, this lawyer may call a therapist to court to support the State's recommendations for the best interest of the child. This could include decisions about visitation, a child's return home, or other issues.
- **Criminal Defense or Public Defender:** In a criminal case, a criminal defense lawyer could call a therapist to court to make the argument that that the client did not commit the crime. If your child is involved in the child welfare system, the public defender is the biological parent's lawyer. This lawyer will likely ask the therapist questions that help show if and how your child is making progress in therapy or to make any recommendations related to visitation or return home.
- **Guardian ad Litem (GAL), Attorney of a Child, Child Representative:** These lawyers represent your child in court. They are involved in cases with conflicts regarding the best interest of the child. A child's 'best interests' could include topics like custody, visitation, happiness, security, mental health, health, and/or development. This may include when a child is involved in the child welfare system or when there are differences of opinions between caregivers that cannot be resolved outside of court. In Cook County, Illinois, the child's lawyer and the guardian ad litem (GAL) may be different. According to www.cookcountycourt.org, the following are true:
 - The GAL is a court-appointed lawyer for the child that is required to investigate the facts of a case, talk to the child and family members, and testify or make recommendations that are in the best interests of the child. A judge will make the final decision. The GAL does not have privileged (confidential) communication and can talk openly with all parties involved.

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In addition to the Monthly Supplements, CCTASI developed two additional resources to provide information about common situations that not every child and family encounters. These

include “Psychotropic Medication” and “Court-Involved Youth (Child Welfare Involved Youth and Legal Dependents).”

Child Therapy Glossary

The Child Therapy Glossary was created to help explain terms used in child therapy that may be confusing or difficult to understand. The glossary includes words that are used in the calendar and supplemental readings. It also includes terms often used by child therapists or professionals in therapy settings.

Tutorials

[C.A.R.E Calendar Introduction](#)

[C.A.R.E Calendar – Tutorial Front Page](#)

[C.A.R.E Calendar – Tutorial Back Page](#)

[C.A.R.E. Calendar Tutorial - Monthly Supplement & Special Topics](#)