

Snohomish County ECEAP
Questions and Answers for using new Releases of Information
September 2009

Question: Why do we have new Release of Information (ROI) forms?

Answer: First, in order to implement the new Mental Health Policy and Procedures, over the summer of 2009, site Program Managers requested a ROI form that parents/guardians could sign to consent to observation and consultation with a mental health consultant.

Second, in creating the ROI for the Mental Health Policy, we discovered that the current "Authorization for Mutual Exchange of Health Information" is not compliant with federal and state privacy and confidentiality laws (e.g. HIPAA and FERPA). It then became urgent to create new forms to ensure compliance with these laws.

Question: There are two new forms. For what circumstances do I use each form?

Answer: The "Authorization to Release Confidential Information" should be used when obtaining or providing information regarding mental health services information, child's health and immunization records, education and special education information, as applicable

The "Consent for Release of Information" should be used when releasing confidential information for other purposes, including use of photographs and providing information for classroom directories, kindergarten transition, or service providers (for holiday baskets, etc.), as applicable.

Question: Which forms do these new ROI forms replace?

Answer: These forms replace the "Authorization for Mutual Exchange of Health Information" and portions of the "Parental Consent" form only related to giving permission to exchange child's information with health care providers or school district staff, and for using confidential information for volunteers to contact parents/guardians regarding program or classroom activities.

Please continue to use the "Parental Consent" form, and we will revise and give you the new version at the Family Support training in March 2010.

Question: What if I have already sent a signed "Authorization of Mutual Exchange of Health Information" form to the child's doctor to obtain a record of the child's health exam?

Answer: If you have sent these forms and you received the records within 90 days of the parent signing the form, you do not need to send the new form to the provider. If you have not received the records within 90 days of the parent signing the form, you will need the parent to sign the new ROI in order to obtain that information.

Note: some providers will not release records based on the old form (which has already happened with one of the ECEAP sites).

Question: On the "Consent for Release of Information" form, can I check all the boxes and have the parent/guardian sign the single form?

Answer: No, each box checked will require a separate form be signed by the parent/guardian. So you could potentially have four (4) forms signed.

Question: What if my school district/agency has some or all of these ROI forms to use with the families?

Answer: If your school district/agency's information sharing policies and ROI forms are more specific and/or stringent than Snohomish County ECEAP, you should follow those policies and use those forms.

Also if you are in a school district site, the district may already have information sharing policies and ROI forms in place that allow you to share information within the district with other district staff, e.g. for kindergarten transition. However, if you are sharing information with a different school district, you will need to complete these forms to allow you to share the information.

Question: Do I have the parents/guardians sign these ROI forms at enrollment?

Answer: These releases expire within 90 days (or sooner) of the parent/guardian signing the form. You would want to have parents/guardians sign when the need to release the information arises. For example, an ROI signed in the fall to create the parent directory/phone tree; another ROI signed in November for holiday baskets, etc.

Please contact your County Coordinator if you have further questions about how to use these forms.

Thank you!