What is a Profile?

A profile for a person with autism is a one or two-page summary that highlights important information about the individual. Depending on who will use the profile the following information may be included:

- likes and dislikes
- strengths
- motivators
- challenges
- triggers
- communication style/method
- social interaction
- unusual behaviour
- specific health concerns and medication
- self-care issues
- an important IEP goal
- names and contact information for key personnel who provide support

The information, presented in a format that allows the reader to quickly access brief information, is intended as a snapshot only. It does not replace reports and more complete descriptors that the people who regularly support the person will need to know and understand.

Once the page has been developed and printed, it is laminated or inserted into a clear page protector. Lamination is preferred to ensure that the document remains in good condition and does not get lost in a pile of 'other' papers.

At preschool, daycare, or school, the profile can be of invaluable assistance for substitute teachers or assistants. It can also be helpful for those personnel who do not have regular contact with the person but may interact with them on occasion. This could include a school principal, secretary or librarian. Including a photo of the person on the profile page is recommended.

Information to Share in a Profile

When you are introducing someone with ASD to a person who does not know him and may not be familiar with ASD careful consideration about what to include in a profile is important. The key is to share what is most pertinent for the situation in which the service provider gives support. Avoid providing information that is not crucial for the nature of the type of support being provided. For example, don't include information about whether the person with ASD enjoys swimming if the support provided is not related to recreation or where the person with ASD will not be near water during the time he is being supported.

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The purpose of the profile is to offer concise information, providing meaningful facts that will assist the service provider to support your child effectively. There is no doubt, if there were to be a long-term relationship between the child and the service provider, a snapshot, one-pager would be insufficient. The profile will never replace detailed information and understanding necessary for a support person who will work with your child over a long time period.

Don't forget to include a recent photo of your child, particularly when your child is being supported in a group setting. This will ensure that the service provider knows specifically which child is in question rather than having to guess.

Significant issues to consider when preparing the profile:

1. What are the child's **strengths and interests**? Does the child have a special interest that could motivate him/her in the learning process or that should be avoided because he/she perseverates on the interest?

2. What is the child's **learning style**? Does he learn by seeing, listening or having a hands on opportunity? What is the best way to provide feedback on the child's work? It could be a specific reward or token, a pat on the back, smile or high 5. Some children do not respond well to any immediate feedback.

3. How does your child **communicate?** Does he use picture symbols, photographs, sign language, words, or a combination? Does the child have a special communication device he uses? Does the child ask for what he wants or needs and how? What are the ways your child expresses emotions such as joy, sadness, being upset?

4. Does your child have **sensory** sensitivities; either over or under-sensitive to sound, light, textures, smells or tastes?

5. Are there **specific medical issues** that are important to reference such as epilepsy, allergies, etc.? Does you child take medication and will it need to be given by the service provider?

6. Are there **specific behaviours** to be aware of such as a tendency for the child to run away, or toileting issues, how the child can be calmed if upset, etc?

7. Does the child have specific students/friends he likes or dislikes?

Remember this document must be kept updated. As the child changes so should the document!

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