

# OUTPATIENT GOAL WRITING

## HOW TO WRITE SOLID GOALS TO CAPTURE SUCCESSES IN THE SHORT-TERM AND LONG-TERM

Goals are required across all settings, diagnoses, and stages of therapy. To check all the boxes for insurance authorizations and multidisciplinary teams, the **SMART** goal framework is appropriate. **Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Timebound**. This provides an excellent starting point for goal writing and helps plug in the required pieces. Here are ten additional tips/tricks for elevating goal writing.

- 1 Identify your audience for the goal. It should make sense to them and meet their goal criteria in a language that is self-explanatory.
- 2 Envision the child where you expect/hope they will be in one year; then work backwards.
- 3 Chunk longer term goals into specific tasks (that become your short term goals) that the child will need to achieve their big goal.
- 4 Adjust goals along the way as needed; just provide an explanation of changes in your documentation.
- 5 Ensure short-term goals can be achieved in a matter of sessions, not months/years--those goals should be reserved for a longer term goal.
- 6 It's okay to write goals a child can easily achieve. This will show teams, insurance companies, and families progress is occurring and that interventions are effective.
- 7 Utilize standardized assessment tools to identify areas in which a child did not score at age-expected levels and transform those targets into goals.
- 8 Integrate goals that are meaningful for the child to function in everyday life. If achieving the goal will significantly impact their life in a positive way, that is a GREAT goal.
- 9 If interventions are targeted towards goals and regular measurement of achievement is occurring, goals should be achieved at regular intervals. When goals are not achieved, think through: is my intervention/approach not working? Is this goal too difficult? How can I change this goal to be more appropriate?
- 10 Goals should reflect age-expected skills. Discharge from therapy would come if they are meeting goals that are approaching age-appropriate skills. If you're having trouble writing new goals for a child making lots of progress, maybe it's time to discharge and check in and monitor as needed.

### LONG-TERM GOAL EXAMPLE #1:

In 12 months, Sarah will demonstrate age-appropriate conversation skills with multiple conversational partners in multiple settings, on a variety of topics in 3/5 opportunities.

*Identify 3-5 stepping stones a client would need to achieve this goal:*

- Answering questions appropriately
- Asking questions appropriately
- 1-3 back and forth conversational exchanges
- Demonstrates topic maintenance

### LONG-TERM GOAL EXAMPLE #2:

In 12 months, Juan (currently 1 year old with language skills of about 6 months) will demonstrate expressive language skills commensurate with same-aged peers (2 years old) in 4/5 observances in at least two settings.

*Short-term goals: 3-5 stepping stone skills a child would need to achieve the goal:*

- Pair gesture with vocalization to indicate a want/need
- Use word approximation to request items across multiple environments
- Use five 2-word phrases consistently across communication partners