



This guide offers suggestions for presenting **Ongoing Child Assessment: Collecting and Using Anecdotal Records**. This in-service suite includes a PowerPoint presentation and supporting materials. Please use and adapt these materials as needed for specific audiences.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- PowerPoint presentation (21 slides)
- Projector and audio equipment
- Learning Activities:
 - » *Selecting Objective Observations*
 - » *Collecting an Anecdotal Record* (Video)
 - » *Changing Teaching Strategies*
 - » *Observation as Part of the Daily Routine*
- Tips for Teachers
- Tools for Teachers:
 - » *Anecdotal Record Notecards*
 - » *What to Record Today*
- Tools for Supervisors:
 - » *Observation Form*
 - » *Interpretation Form*
- Helpful Resources
- Flip chart or similar large paper, and markers for writing participant ideas

BEFORE YOU BEGIN:

- The purpose of this presentation is to help participants learn practical and simple methods for collecting anecdotal records, and specific steps for writing anecdotal notes.
- This is one in a series of in-service suites about ongoing child assessment.
- Anecdotal records, along with checklists, work samples, and video, are one way to collect information on child progress. The in-service suites on these assessment methods can be used alone or in combination to provide professional development regarding ongoing child assessment.
- Learning activities include practice in writing complete and objective anecdotal notes.
- Consider bringing in different examples of anecdotal records to share with participants.
- Suggestions of potential follow-up activities for participants are provided at the end of this document.

NOTE

These documents provide support and additional documentation for the ideas in this presentation:

Bredenkamp, S. (2011). *Effective practices in early childhood education*. (Chapter 11, pp. 343–344, 345–347, 348, 350–352). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

Dichtelmiller, M. L. (2011). *The power of assessment: Transforming teaching and learning*. (Chapters 5, 6, and 10). Washington, DC: Teaching Strategies.

McAfee, O., & Leong, D. J. (2011). *Assessing and guiding young children's development and learning* (5th ed.). (Chapters 4, pp. 49–52, 63–69; 5, pp. 73–76; 6, pp. 100–101; 7; and 9). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.



SLIDE 1: ONGOING CHILD ASSESSMENT: COLLECTING AND USING ANECDOTAL RECORDS

Introductions:

- Begin the training by giving participants background information on yourself.
- Provide an opportunity for participants to introduce themselves.
- Conduct an icebreaker activity to promote participation.

Examples:

- Ask participants to share their definition of ongoing assessment.
- Ask participants to name one strategy they use to collect information about children's progress in their classroom.
- Ask participants to share a brief anecdote about a child in their classroom.

Introduce the topic.

This presentation is about using anecdotal records as a way to collect information on child progress. Documenting information on child progress can help teachers become more effective.





SLIDE 2: NCQTL'S FRAMEWORK FOR EFFECTIVE EVERYDAY PRACTICE

Introduce NCQTL.

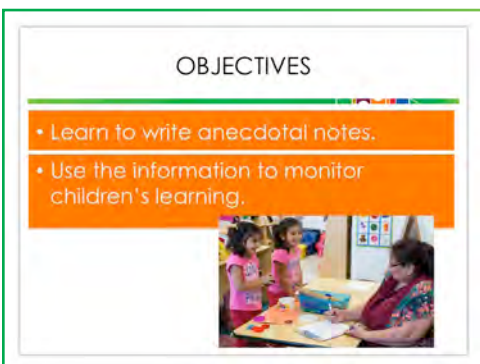
The four components of the House Framework support school readiness for all children:

- The foundation represents effective and engaging interactions and environments.
- The pillars represent research-based curricula and teaching practices, and ongoing child assessment.
- The roof represents highly individualized teaching and learning.
- All four components interact with each other and are essential to effective practices.

This in-service suite is part of the *Ongoing Child Assessment* pillar of the House. It focuses on how teachers can use anecdotal records to document children's progress and collect child assessment information. Assessment information helps teachers evaluate kindergarten readiness and effective teaching practices.

NOTE

Remind participants that any record of child progress (including video, work samples, and photographs) must be treated consistently with their program's record-keeping policies, especially in regards to ensuring appropriate confidentiality of information.



SLIDE 3: OBJECTIVES

The children in your Head Start classroom have to learn many things in order to be ready for kindergarten. How do you know they're learning what they need to know? By observing them during everyday activities in your classroom. Ongoing child assessment is necessary to understand children's progress and is important to quality teaching and learning.

In this presentation we will discuss:

- How to write anecdotal records and use them to document observations of children's behaviors.
- How to interpret and use the information from anecdotal notes to monitor and assess children's progress.

EMPHASIZE

Children aren't automatically learning just because they're present in a program.



DEFINITION

An anecdotal record is a written note of what children do or say during an everyday activity.



SLIDE 4: DEFINITION

How can you collect information about what you see and hear children doing?

Anecdotal records are one useful way to collect ongoing child assessment information. Simply put, an anecdotal record is a written note of what children do or say during an everyday activity.

EMPHASIZE



Anecdotal records help teachers understand what children are saying, doing, and learning in the classroom.





Length of video: Approximately 5 minutes and 41 seconds

SLIDE 5: VIDEO: COLLECTING ANECDOTAL RECORDS

Introduce the video.

This video shows teachers collecting and using anecdotal notes in the classroom.

Ask participants to think about the following questions as they watch the video:

- Why do the teachers feel it's important to record what the children are doing and saying?
- How do the teachers decide what to record?
- What do the teachers do to make it easier to record observations?

VIDEO

DISCUSSION

Ask participants to share their comments and answers to the above questions.

Points to highlight from the video:

- Documenting what children say and do is key to intentional teaching. Teachers need to know children's level of development in order to plan lessons, individualize instruction, and set goals with families.
- Teachers use anecdotal notes to share what they have observed with other teachers and with families.
- Teachers record observations that show children's progress on learning goals related to areas of the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework (HSCDELF).
- Teachers in the video use a variety of observation recording methods (labels, sticky notes, clipboards, etc.). Some teachers use labels that can be put in pockets or on counters; others write informal observations on checklists or on notes that can go into a child's portfolio.

NOTE

- All adults in the classroom work together to observe and document observations.
- The observations and goals are shared with families.



KEEPING TRACK

How do you record what the children in your program are doing?



SLIDE 6: KEEPING TRACK

Now that we've heard from some classroom teachers, let's share ideas. How do you currently record observations about the children in your program?

DISCUSSION

Ask participants to share examples of how they use anecdotal notes to record observations of children in their program.

Record ideas on a large sheet of paper or white board and refer to them during the presentation as appropriate.



PURPOSES OF ONGOING ASSESSMENT

- Monitor progress toward goals
- Generate questions and hypotheses
- Adjust instruction
- Exchange information with families about children's learning at home and in school
- Share information with specialists
- Inform teaching
- Support children's development beyond the classroom

EMPHASIZE *

Anecdotal records can be used to monitor progress toward goals, build relationships with families, and inform teaching.

SLIDE 7: PURPOSES OF ONGOING ASSESSMENT

The information collected using anecdotal records:

- Helps teachers **monitor children's progress** toward their goals. Are children meeting curriculum goals and standards? Ongoing assessments help determine whether a child has achieved specific skills.
- Helps teachers **generate questions and hypothesize** about how children are learning. Are children making the expected levels of progress? Why might a child not be making good progress? Does a particular child need more support or help to accomplish a task?
- Helps teachers **exchange information with families** and guide teaching teams in further assessment and instruction. Is the family seeing similar progress at home? What strategies can they use at home and in other settings to help facilitate a child's progress?
- Provides data for individualizing instruction. Teachers can **share anecdotal information with specialists** and work collaboratively to individualize instruction.
- **Informs teaching.** Teachers can look at facts and data, and use them to plan and adjust instruction. For example, when a child is not making good progress, anecdotal notes can be used to figure out what prompts might be provided, or how an activity could be changed slightly, to help the child be more successful.
- Helps teachers and families **support children's development** and learning beyond the classroom. By using this information to change instructional approaches, and sharing it with family members, teachers can help children make better progress both inside and outside the classroom.

DISCUSSION

Ask participants to share examples of their own assessment practices as they relate to the purposes listed above.

Add examples of assessment based on your own experiences.



THE BASICS: ANECDOTAL RECORDS

Date and time: *January 24, 2014*

Setting: *Outdoor play area*

Curriculum area/domain: *Gross Motor*

Child: *Jackie N.*

Objective description:
Jackie pedaled a tricycle 10 feet in a straight line.

Observer: *Miriam S.*

EMPHASIZE *

You're interested in children's progress toward curriculum goals, so focus on describing what they say or do that shows their progress toward specific goals.

**SLIDE 8:
THE BASICS: ANECDOTAL RECORDS**

An anecdotal record is a strategy for documenting behavior you observe. To get useful and comprehensive information about a child's learning, be sure to:

- Focus on specific skills and behaviors that relate to a child's learning goal.
- Observe children's skills in different activities and classroom areas.
- Monitor children's behavior over time, not just once.

When writing an anecdotal record, describe key information about what you see or hear children doing. Write down:


- The date and time of your observation.
- Where the observation takes place.
- The curriculum area or learning domain.
- A brief, accurate, objective description of what you see or hear.

To help keep all your records organized, make sure you include the names of the:

- Observer.
- Child or children being observed (name or initials).

**BEING OBJECTIVE:
ANECDOTAL RECORDS**

- Write down what you see and hear.
 - Don't assume the child's feelings.
 - Don't assume the child's motivation.
- Write down facts, not opinions.
- Use words that describe but do not judge.



EMPHASIZE *

Anecdotal records should include facts that other people would also be able to see or hear.

**SLIDE 9:
BEING OBJECTIVE: ANECDOTAL RECORDS**

As you focus on a child's goals (and the curriculum areas or domains they relate to), remember to be objective. Write down facts, not opinions or assumptions. Avoid making a judgment or guessing.

How can you be sure you are writing **objective** anecdotal records? Ask yourself:

- **Can I see it?** Don't assume a child's feelings.
- **Can I hear it?** Don't assume a child's motivation.
- Would another person agree about what occurred?



EXAMPLE: ANECDOTAL RECORD

10/4/2014, 9:20 a.m., Snack table

Domain area: Expressive Language/Fine Motor

Fran:

- Said "Please pass the crackers."
- Spread cream cheese on four small crackers with knife.
- Opened a small carton of milk.

Observer: Ms. J

EMPHASIZE *

The description is objective—only what could be seen or heard.



SLIDE 10: EXAMPLE: ANECDOTAL RECORD

Here is an example of an anecdotal record. The date, time, and place are included—October 4th, 9:20 in the morning, at the snack table. The description is objective and focuses on specific curriculum areas or domains.

This note shows Fran's progress in the Expressive Language area. Fran said, "Please pass the crackers," to request a needed item.

Fran's progress in the Fine Motor Skills area was also observed. She was able to use a knife for spreading and she opened a small milk carton.

LEARNING ACTIVITY: SELECTING OBJECTIVE OBSERVATIONS

In this activity, participants practice recognizing objective, factual descriptions of children's behaviors, and then write down how objective observations can help them assess a child's progress.

Divide the large group into smaller groups.

HANDOUT 

Distribute the *Selecting Objective Observations* learning activity and review directions.

DISCUSSION 

Ask volunteers to share their answers with the larger group. What are the benefits of objective descriptions?

Points to highlight:

- Record facts rather than opinions, descriptions instead of judgments.
- Record enough details to capture the moment.
- Record the behaviors in the order that they occurred.
- Include information about the context or setting of the observation.



PLANNING AN OBSERVATION



SLIDE 11: PLANNING AN OBSERVATION

It's important to be realistic; teachers cannot expect to be able to record everything that occurs in their programs. You can think strategically to collect information that can inform instruction for all children in the class.

You can plan ahead of time what you want to observe during different activities. Although multiple skills—and behaviors across domains—can be observed in the same activity, teachers should make intentional choices to focus on a few.

The following learning activity shows that although many skills could be observed during an art activity (fine motor, symbolic representation, etc.), the teacher focused on social skills.



LEARNING ACTIVITY: COLLECTING AN ANECDOTAL RECORD

In this activity, participants watch a short video and practice recording their observations of a child's social behaviors during an art activity. The video *Anecdotal Records—Art Activity* is found on the Powerpoint slide for this learning activity.

HANDOUT

Distribute the *Collecting an Anecdotal Record* learning activity and the *Tools for Teachers* handout (*Anecdotal Record Notecards*) to each participant. Review the learning activity directions.

VIDEO

Show the video: *Anecdotal Records—Art Activity*. Show the video a second time and have participants write down their observations on the learning activity notecard. Additional blank notecards are on the *Tools for Teachers* handout.

DISCUSSION

Ask volunteers to share comments and examples with the larger group.

Point to highlight:

While behaviors that relate to multiple curriculum areas or domains can be observed during an activity, it is important that teachers plan what to record ahead of time.



ALL CLASSROOM AREAS



SLIDE 12: ALL CLASSROOM AREAS

Here is one easy method for collecting anecdotal notes across all areas of the classroom.

Place clipboards with note paper or cards in different areas of the room. The teacher and assistants can write down their observations as they observe children.

When writing materials are available where they are likely to be needed, it's easier to pause for a moment and make a note what children are doing and saying. The presence of paper or notecards also serves as a reminder to document observations.

ALL CURRICULUM AREAS



SLIDE 13: ALL CURRICULUM AREAS

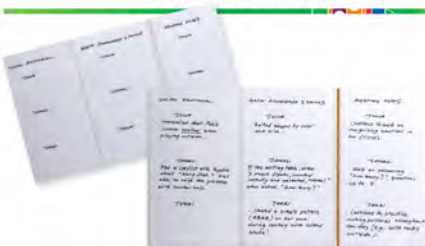
This example is one way to collect anecdotal records on all needed curriculum areas—with labels.

Teaching staff can use sheets of labels to write down their observations of children's behavior. Each column represents a different domain of the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework. The children's names are written in ahead of time, reminding teachers to observe each child in every area. After class, the children's notated labels are placed in their portfolio or binder.

NOTE

This example shows one way to use labels but they could also be used more like sticky notes (without pre-labeling the names and domains).

ALL CURRICULUM AREAS: BEFORE AND AFTER



SLIDE 14: ALL CURRICULUM AREAS: BEFORE AND AFTER

On the left, labels have been prepared for recording anecdotal notes for each child in the Social & Emotional Development and Mathematics Knowledge & Skills domains.

On the right, the same labels are shown after observations have been added. You can use labels organized in this way to gather assessment information about each child, in each learning or development domain.

NOTE

The teacher will add the date and her name before putting the labels in the child's portfolio.



KEEP IT SIMPLE:
ANECDOTAL RECORDS



EMPHASIZE *

Use whatever method is the most efficient for your classroom.

SLIDE 15: KEEP IT SIMPLE: ANECDOTAL RECORDS

Here's one more suggestion: Use simple and easily accessible methods and materials.

In one classroom, a teacher uses sticky notes. These could be placed in different areas of the room or in the teacher's pocket.

In another classroom, a teacher uses a clipboard and note paper.

Which simple, everyday writing materials would be convenient to use in your classroom?

What might make it easier for you to write notes while you interact with children during everyday classroom activities?



LEARNING ACTIVITY: CHANGING TEACHING STRATEGIES

In this activity, participants read a classroom scenario and identify changes in teaching, based on using anecdotal notes to collect observations.

Divide the large group into smaller groups.

HANDOUT

Distribute the *Changing Teaching Strategies* learning activity, and review directions.

Each group identifies a note taker and a reporter, and then discusses the scenario.

DISCUSSION

Have reporters from each group share ideas from the small group discussion with the larger group.

Point to highlight:

Recording observations of all the children helped the teachers in this classroom identify children who needed additional help with certain skills.



**PLANNING OBSERVATIONS:
ACTIVITY MATRIX**

	Matthew	Leo	Carla
Free play			Joins group when requested.
Outside		Moves up and down steps.	
Circle time	Recognizes name in print		
Snack			Counts out three objects.

SLIDE 16: PLANNING OBSERVATIONS: ACTIVITY MATRIX

Some children in the classroom may have highly individualized goals and objectives that require very frequent collection of assessment information. For example, those with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or behavior support plans may need data collected daily or weekly.

A classroom activity matrix can help the teaching team plan who or what to observe. The children's names can be written across the top of the matrix. The classroom's schedule of activities can be written down the side.



LEARNING ACTIVITY: OBSERVATION AS PART OF THE DAILY ROUTINE

In this activity, participants practice preparing to record observations of the children in their classrooms.

Divide the large group into smaller groups.

HANDOUT

Distribute the *Observation as Part of the Daily Routine* learning activity and the *Tools for Teachers* handout (*What to Record Today* classroom activity matrix) to each participant. Review the learning activity directions. For an example of a completed activity matrix, refer participants to the *Tools for Teachers* handout. *Tools for Teachers* includes both an example matrix and a blank matrix that is designed for teachers to copy and use in their own classrooms.

DISCUSSION

Ask volunteers to share comments and examples with the group.



USING ANECDOTAL RECORDS



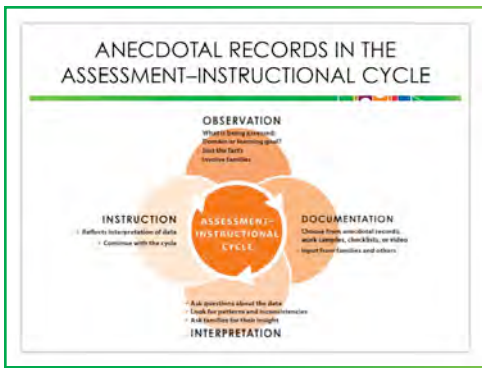
SLIDE 17: USING ANECDOTAL RECORDS

It's important to transfer the anecdotal records information into your program's curriculum or assessment system. When you record and then review this information, you will be able to determine whether children have learned what they need to know. You can then use the information from anecdotal records to decide what and how to teach.

EMPHASIZE *

It's important to use the information from anecdotal records—that is what it's for!





SLIDE 18: ANECDOTAL RECORDS IN THE ASSESSMENT-INSTRUCTIONAL CYCLE

The assessment–instructional cycle refers to the ongoing and interrelated decision-making process that takes place during child assessment. Teachers continually make informed decisions about what to observe and why, and they choose the best ways to gather and document information about children’s behaviors. They also decide how to organize, interpret, and use the information to guide and adjust their instruction. Throughout the process, teachers seek input from families and share information with them.

Here are four points to keep in mind:

Observation

You’ve learned the importance of deciding in advance what to observe and how to plan for collecting information during regular classroom activities and routines.

Documentation

One way to document your observations is to make anecdotal records.

Interpretation

For the anecdotal records to be valuable, the teaching team needs to use them. After documentation, the teaching team, together with the child’s family, interprets the information by looking at the facts or data, discussing possible meanings and underlying causes of behaviors, and summarizing findings.

Instruction

The teaching team, with input from the child’s family, uses their findings to plan instruction and to make changes in teaching, so that every child will learn.

DISCUSSION

Ask the group to share their own examples of documenting and interpreting anecdotal observations that lead to teaching improvements.

EMPHASIZE



The steps in the assessment–instructional cycle repeat continuously for each child.





Length of video: Approximately 32 seconds

SLIDE 19: VIDEO: DOCUMENTATION FOR INTENTIONAL TEACHING

Introduce the video.

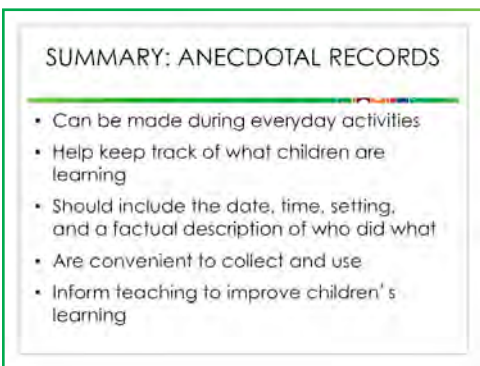
This short clip is from the video we watched earlier in this session. As we watch it again, let's focus on the importance of making observations to inform intentional teaching.

VIDEO 

DISCUSSION 

Ask participants to share their comments about the video.

- How do observations help inform teaching?
- Do you think differently about collecting anecdotal records now, after watching the second video?



SLIDE 20: SUMMARY: ANECDOTAL RECORDS

- Anecdotal records can be made in an ongoing basis during everyday activities.
- Anecdotal records help you know whether your children are learning what they need to know.
- Anecdotal records include the date and time, setting, and an objective description of what you observed. An objective description includes what you see and hear—in other words, facts, not opinions.
- Anecdotal records are convenient to collect and use.

To conclude, one valuable strategy for ongoing child assessment is to collect anecdotal records and use them to make teaching decisions that improve children's learning.

HANDOUT 

Distribute handouts, if not distributed during presentation.

Based on participant roles:

- Distribute and review the *Tips for Teachers* handout.
- Distribute and review *Tools for Teachers*, which includes a blank copy of *Anecdotal Record Notecards*. It also includes an example copy and a blank copy of the *What to Record Today* classroom activity matrix.
- Distribute and review the two *Tools for Supervisors* forms.
- Distribute and review the *Helpful Resources* handout and highlight how the list can be used.

EMPHASIZE

Anecdotal records inform teaching so that teachers can help children meet learning goals.



FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

SHARE THE FOLLOWING SUGGESTIONS WITH PARTICIPANTS:

- Work with a colleague to develop a system for using anecdotal records.
- Consult with a more experienced teacher.
- Set up regular meetings with families to share assessment information.
- Choose a time and day to review data on a regular basis with teaching teams.



SLIDE 21: CLOSING

Provide participants with NCQTL contact information and encourage them to visit our website for additional resources to support effective assessment and teaching practices in the classroom.