

Keeping a Record of What Happened

PatternProof | Optional guide | Revised October 22, 2026

Your choice comes first

You can seek support without a written record. A few words are enough; skip anything, pause, or stop. Missing details do not make your experience less real. Do not delay getting help to finish notes.

Three entries may make recurring details easier to notice. **The number alone does not confirm a pattern.** Three is an example, not a target, minimum, or research-backed threshold. You do not have to look for patterns yourself.

Before you save or print

Consider access to your device, accounts, backups, downloads, and paper. Some apps notify others about screenshots or screen recordings; printers may keep records. If documenting increases risk, pause and ask an advocate about safer options. Do not put yourself at risk to collect information. Ask a local lawyer about recording laws before recording if unsure.

If you choose to make a note

When: Event date and time, if known; mark estimates. Separately note when you wrote it. Writing later is okay.

What: Describe what you saw, heard, received, or did. Separate your observations from what you think they mean. If someone told you, say who and when, if safe.

Words and gaps: Use quotes for exact words; otherwise label them approximate or a summary. Write "not sure" rather than guessing. Add a dated correction or clarification instead of replacing the earlier note.

Optional context: Where, who was present, and what happened before or afterward. You may describe fear, injury, disrupted work, parenting, money, or other effects in your own words. Omit sensitive locations if unsafe.

Related items: Note an item name or date. When safe, keep original files and messages, including sender details, dates, and surrounding conversation. Make copies for highlighting or redaction; keep originals unchanged. Do not access accounts without permission.

If a person or tool helps write a note, check it against your recollection and sources; do not accept added guesses. Do not question or coach a child to build a record; seek specialist guidance.

Before sharing

Writing does not require sharing. Ask who can see a copy, how it will be used, and what confidentiality limits apply. A log is not automatically legally protected because it is in an app or sent to a lawyer. It may be requested in a legal case. A local lawyer can explain privacy, preservation duties, and court submission rules.

For organizations offering this guide

Offer the blank guide without routinely collecting completed logs. Never make documenting or agreeing to share a condition of support. Explain confidentiality and any reporting duties before inviting details. Collect only what is needed for the requested service. Ask before helping, avoid suggesting answers, and let the person review. Explain access, retention, and any consent needed for outside sharing. Offer language or accessibility support without requiring more disclosure.

General information, not legal advice or a safety plan. A log does not guarantee what a court will accept or decide.

Further guidance: [NNEDV documentation tips](#) | [NNEDV preparing for court](#) | [NNEDV confidentiality](#)