

Bio/Psycho/Social Assessment Report or Social History

A social history report is a professional document that is frequently prepared by social workers in a variety of direct practice settings. This document may be identified in different ways within organizations. The essence of the report documents the social aspect of the past and current life experience of the client. The word *social* refers to the interactions between the client system and the significant systems in their social environment (e.g. family, school, job, medical community, legal system, social supports, etc.).

An individual's past behavior is often a good predictor of future behavior. In addition, past experiences can provide a basis for understanding the causes underlying the current behavior. This information can assist the social work practitioner in having a better understanding of the client's level of functioning and the most appropriate plan of intervention.

The organization, format, and content requirements of a social assessment report will vary across organizations and should be consistent with the agency and individual program objectives.

A comprehensive social history report should have the following characteristics and components:

1. **Objectivity** – Use language that is descriptive and specific rather than judgmental and value-laden. Use open-ended questions whenever possible.
2. **Accuracy** – Pay careful attention to the accuracy of your information. For information obtained directly from a client or their family member, it is imperative that you report this information as such. (i.e. "According to Ms. Smith, Jim has a long history of substance abuse and domestic violence.")
If you obtained documentation from a reliable professional source, which documents a specific aspect of a client's history, you should cite the source of the information and use the language in the report rather than interpret the information.
3. **Conciseness** – Be as concise as possible in your narrative. Avoid redundancy and unnecessary words.
4. **Clarity and simplicity** – Use language that a wide variety of readers will understand rather than the use of technical words or "pseudo jargon."
5. **Relevancy** – Be careful to document only information that is relevant to the situation. Do not include information that may be interesting, but has no relevance to the presenting problem or services recommended.

6. **Confidentiality** – Be sensitive to the information included in the report and be cognizant of the client's privacy. Remember that many professionals, including court personnel and lawyers at times, may have eventual access to this report.
7. **Strength based** – It should be evident in the report that the writer made a concerted effort to identify client strengths and uses these strengths in the development of interventions.
8. **Organization** – The Social Assessment should be well-organized and easy to follow. Pay special attention to chronology of events and report on events consistent with the chronology. Be sure to have detailed "identifying information" at the beginning of the report which identifies all clients, significant professional collaterals, I.D. numbers, dates of birth, address and phone numbers. Use logical headings for each area of the report.

☐ Here are examples of some of the headings commonly used in social assessment reports: **(Note: For the purpose of this assignment please change the names, DOB's, addresses, phone numbers, places of employment, name of agency and any other information that may link this report to the client. You can use the "find and replace" feature of Word to make these changes easily.**

- ☐ Identifying information
- ☐ Presenting problem/reason for referral or social work involvement
- ☐ Client's perception of the problem
- ☐ Dates of contact, opening and closing dates
- ☐ Client's background or family of origin (outline the client's family of origin experience from birth to current)
- ☐ Educational background
- ☐ Employment history
- ☐ Physical and health history
- ☐ Mental health and psychological history and functioning
- ☐ Substance use history
- ☐ Legal and criminal background
- ☐ Social support system including religious and spiritual beliefs
- ☐ Housing status
- ☐ Economic status
- ☐ Assessment and recommendations
- ☐ Intervention/Treatment Plan

***Since agencies vary widely in the expectations and requirements for social assessment/social history reports, students should review previously prepared reports within their individual programs to become familiar with the organization, style and content of these documents prior to the completion of this assignment.