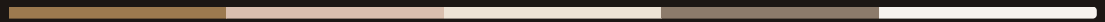


Documentation *Best Practices.*

A risk-aware framework for writing cognitive-communication notes that hold up under review.



WHAT'S INSIDE

- What to know before you write
- What every note should capture
- Language that creates unnecessary risk
- A quick do / don't reference

Writing Notes That Protect the Patient — and the Team

Good documentation isn't more documentation. It's the right behavioral detail, captured consistently, so the chart tells an accurate story to whoever reads it next.

BEFORE YOU WRITE

- ☐ **Know who else will read this note: care team, family, auditors, and potentially attorneys**
- ☐ **Separate observed behavior from clinical interpretation in your own mind first**
- ☐ **Have the patient's baseline (if known) in front of you for comparison**

WHAT EVERY COGNITIVE-COMMUNICATION NOTE SHOULD CAPTURE

- ☐ **The specific task or context, not just a global impression**
"Followed 2-step commands in a quiet room" beats "alert and oriented."
- ☐ **What was observed, in behavioral terms**
What the patient said or did, not only your conclusion about it.
- ☐ **Any factors that may have affected performance**
Fatigue, pain, sedation, hearing, language, or time of day.
- ☐ **Functional relevance**
How the finding connects to safety, consent, or discharge planning.
- ☐ **Follow-up or referral status**
What was recommended, and whether it happened.

WHY THE BEHAVIORAL DETAIL MATTERS

"Patient confused" is a conclusion that can be challenged. "Patient could not state the day, month, or reason for admission when asked directly" is an observation that stands on its own — in a chart review, a survey, or a courtroom.

DO

Document specific, observable behavior tied to a specific task and context.

DON'T

Rely on global labels ("pleasant," "cooperative," "confused") as a stand-in for functional detail.

RED-FLAG LANGUAGE TO AVOID

- ☐ Vague global descriptors used without supporting behavioral detail
- ☐ Copy-forwarded cognitive status that doesn't reflect today's presentation
- ☐ Conclusions about capacity or competency outside your scope of practice

Let's talk

EJT

Want this built into your *team's* workflow?

I provide documentation audits and staff training on cognitive-communication charting, built around real risk-management scenarios — not generic compliance slides.

M.S., CCC-SLP

ASHA CERTIFIED

9 States

AZ CA CO FL NM NY PA VA WA

10+ Years

CLINICAL EXPERIENCE

Erica Thomas, M.S., CCC-SLP

ejtcommconsult.com

erica@ejtcommconsult.com

(410) 929-6401