

2.3 - CONFIDENTIALITY

RATIONALE: To protect the privacy of client information and enhance the safety of participants and a non- stigmatizing environment.

STANDARD: All information is to be kept strictly confidential. Confidential information included all files and records (electronic and paper versions), telephone contacts/messages, correspondence, meetings, discussions, visits and exchanges pertaining to SEC and the client.

Support persons accompanying a person with a disability must sign confidentiality agreements.

EXCEPTIONS:

- Court directed (subpoena, search warrant or other legal orders)
- Legislative (reporting suspicion of child abuse or a child in need of protection of the Children's Aid Society; child support agency request; Family Responsibility Office); and/or
- Safety (telling someone in a position of authority if a client is in imminent danger of harming themselves or others).

POLICY: Information should only be shared amongst SEC staff/volunteers as required to perform their jobs and maintain the safety of all participants.

PROCEDURES:

- The Centre has all personnel sign a Confidentiality Agreement upon hiring.
- The Centre fosters a confidential setting by:
 - Concealing private papers (reports, observational notes, court orders, files, telephone messages, staff notes, etc.) at all times,
 - Providing staff and volunteers with covered clipboards,
 - Locking filing cabinets when unattended and not in use,
 - Locking the staff office door(s) when unoccupied,
 - Erasing client phone numbers from telephone memory,
 - Never playing back telephone messages when others may hear,
 - Screening out the potential for participants to overhear conversations to the best of the Centre's ability,
 - Using only the first name of the staff/volunteers at all times,
 - Refraining from discussing participant issues in the presence of other clients or anybody else,
 - Placing any files or records in a locked briefcase when carrying materials outside of the Centre,
 - Ensuring that any electronic devices with information about participants or personnel are password protected,

- Using strong passwords and regularly changing passwords,
- Never leaving any paper or electronic records in a vehicle unattended,
- Sharing information with other staff and volunteers only when it is required for them to perform their jobs and maintain the safety of participants, and
- Refusing any requests for information about staff and/or volunteer home phone numbers/addresses (THIS IS A SAFETY MEASURE).
- Centre staff ensure that discussions with members of the community (general public inquiries) foster confidence in the services of the Centre by:
 - Using general statements about the Centre. For example: "separated/divorced people use the Centre to provide a safe, neutral setting for their children to have access to both parties." Staff do not disclose information about who is or who is not using the Centre.
 - Using the statement: "I am not at liberty to provide you with this type of information", if asked to disclose client information without consent.
 - Suggesting that people contact the Coordinator when in doubt about whether or not information is to be shared.