

UNITINGCARE GOULBURN NORTH EAST

1.6 PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

Purpose

Privacy relates to many areas including the right not to be observed, listened to or reported upon without consent and not to be the focus of uninvited public attention. Privacy can be applied to the physical environment and possessions, physical and bodily needs, personal relationships and personal information and needs.

Confidential information is collected as part of the assessment process. In assessing client needs and agreeing on services, information is gained about health, families and other social relationships, personal interests, skills and behaviour patterns and financial affairs.

Information relating to staff including their skills, work history, and police record is collected.

Confidentiality relates specifically to the protection of information concerning clients, staff and the organisation.

Policy

- Management will ensure that processes are in place to ensure that client, staff and organisation information remains confidential and secure.
- Management will, as part of the induction process, ensure that staff are trained appropriately.
- Clients and staff have the right to request access to their records.
- An individual has the right to request their health information be made available to another health service provider.
- Staff will follow the protocols relating to the disclosure and distribution of personal information and accessing of personal records.
- Staff who infringe this policy will proceed to disciplinary procedures.
- Personal information is maintained accurately and is up-to-date.

Procedure

- Clients and staff are informed of their right to confidentiality and how confidentiality is observed.
- Clients are requested to sign a Consent Form which specifies that they understand that information is to be shared with other service providers.
- The Privacy and Confidentiality policy of the organisation, including access to health information will be made available to anyone who may request it.
- Information is not released to any third party without the consent of the client. Any information regarding clients is released only to those who have a legitimate interest or need for the information as part of their role in service provision.
- Only information relevant to service provision will be sought.

Security

- Client and staff records are stored in a locked secure cabinet with restricted access.
- Access to electronic records relating to clients and staff is controlled and restricted by password and the IT systems manager. Authorisation is granted on a 'needs to know basis'.
- All working notes pertaining to clients that do not need to be kept permanently are shredded.
- Notes recorded on the computer are protected by a password and are subject to the same requirements as written notes. Screens in public access areas are turned away so they are difficult to read and screen savers are implemented.
- Internet access is restricted to organisation business only. No organisation, client or staff information is to be released without the express permission of the Chief Executive Officer.
- The transference of data via email or fax is secured by minimising the data communicated. The data will be accompanied by identification of the communication source and its authenticity, and a clear confidentiality statement to the recipient in relation to the data and its source.
- Records taken out of the organisation for home visits, or returning to 12 Rowan Street for archiving will at all times be secured in a locked bag, and kept from public view.
- Archiving of electronic and hard copy files will be facilitated in accordance with the Health Privacy Principles – Health records Act 2001 (Vic).

Responsibilities

Staff will ensure that confidentiality is observed in work practice at all times. All staff who handle files are responsible for ensuring that the files are properly stored and that no file containing confidential information is left where there is unrestricted access. The Privacy Officer will ensure that the organisation complies with National Privacy Principles and Guidelines.

References

The Health Records Act 2001 (Vic) www.dms.dpc.vic.gov.au
Information and Privacy Act 2000 (Vic)
Commonwealth Privacy Act 1998
Freedom of Information Act 1082
Office of the Health Services Commissioner (Vic) www.health.vic.gov.au/hsc
Policy 1.7 – Systems Access
Disability Act 2006
Disability Services Commissioner www.odsc.vic.gov.au

Performance Criteria

Element	Performance Criteria
1. Sharing of Information	All clients / carers are informed about the process for sharing information in a language of their choice and will indicate understanding by signing the Consent Form.
2. Storage of Client and Staff Records	All client and staff records are stored in a locked cupboard with restricted access. Electronic information will have restricted access.
3. Client / Carer Rights	Clients are informed of their right to privacy and only information relevant to service provision will be sought.
4. Staff Training	Induction records show that staff have been given appropriate training.

Issued: Aug 03	Review Date: Mar 08
Reviewed by: QI Committee	Review No: 1
Approved by:	Date of Approval: