

Confidentiality Guiding Note for Child Protection Actors

It is essential that all parties maintain confidentiality in all cases of abuse, exploitation or violence, below we outline what that means, why it is important, how to maintain confidentiality and who you can share information with.

What is confidentiality...

Confidentiality: Conditions under which information revealed to an individual in a relationship of trust will **not** be disclosed to others.

Identifying Information: Information which can help to identify a child. It can include names, age, physical description, location of work, home or school, date of visit, details of the case, names of brothers, sisters and other relatives, etc.

Why ensure confidentiality...

For the safety and protection of the child and/or other people involved in the case. Confidentiality helps build trusting relationships between agencies and the children, families and communities they are supporting

How to maintain confidentiality ...

Information collection...

Conduct discussions in private settings. Record discussions without identifying individual's names. Do not leave notebooks unsupervised in public areas. When no longer needed, remove pages containing personal information from notebooks.

Information storage (in situations where it is appropriate or necessary)...

Substitute names and identifying information with codes.

All electronic information about children, for storage or transfer, should be password protected and the passwords changed on a regular basis.

Shred computer printouts, written notes, extra photocopies and reports so they cannot be read.

Information sharing...

Information about cases which could put the child in danger must never be shared.

The transfer of information - verbally, through the mail, electronically, etc - should be password protected and codes should be used instead of names.

Paper files should be transferred by hand between people responsible for the information. During transfers, files should be stored in a sealed box or sealed envelope.

Electronic data storage media (e.g. memory sticks) should be passed by hand between people responsible for the information. Files should be deleted immediately after transfer.

When verbally sharing information, ensure it happens one-on-one, not in a large group, and is in a private space where you cannot be overheard.

Who can you share with...

Sharing of information should be strictly on a 'need to know' basis and only with individuals within agencies **who will take primary responsibility for providing direct support** to the child. This should not be shared in e-mails which can be accidentally forwarded to others.

Information should not be shared with numerous people within the agency, just one responsible person who can follow-up on the case. Keep the number of people informed of the case to a minimum; the fewer people involved the easier to ensure confidentiality.