

**NUMBER: 2.3**  
**TITLE: CONFIDENTIALITY**  
**APPROVED: April 2002 (updated)      REVISED: March 24, 2015**  
**SECTION: Overarching Policies, Procedures and Protocols**

Through its counselling/support services and outreach activities SACHA has access to a great deal of confidential and sensitive information. SACHA recognizes its ethical responsibility to ensure that information about service users is kept in the strictest of confidence.

All SACHA staff, volunteers, and students will maintain clear confidentiality regarding all information obtained during the course of their work. This includes information about service users, as well as organizational, personnel and personal matters.

Violation of this policy is grounds for disciplinary action up to and including dismissal for staff, students, and volunteers.

**PROCEDURES:**

1) Information will only be disclosed with informed consent from the individual or when required by federal and/or provincial statutes or legislation. Exceptions to the rules of Confidentiality include the following:

- a. If there are concerns that a child under 16 years of age may be suffering or may have suffered abuse (including witnessing domestic violence).
- b. Where there is serious concern that the person is a danger to themselves or to another person.
- c. Where information is disclosed that it is reasonable to believe that harm or danger is imminent to a third party.
- d. Where staff, volunteers or students are obligated to report misconduct/abuse as a condition of their membership to a regulatory body or College (e.g. College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers; Regulated Health Professionals Act).
- e. In a medical emergency that requires intervention.

Prior to divulging any information and where possible, staff, volunteers, and students are encouraged to consult with their immediate supervisor or a SACHA colleague. This may not always be possible due to pressing safety concerns and/or work circumstances (e.g. members covering the 24 Hour Support Line).

2) All staff, volunteers, and students shall make reasonable efforts to inform service users of the exceptions of the Confidentiality Policy prior to offering service.

3) All staff, volunteers, and students shall make every reasonable effort to inform service users prior to the release of the information.

- 4) All staff, volunteers, and students are required to sign a Confidentiality Agreement. The Confidentiality Agreement becomes part of all members' personnel file.
- 5) Unless it is the responsibility of their duties, staff, volunteers, or students will not discuss information concerning:
  - a. Service users;
  - b. Personnel issues;
  - c. Legal issues;
  - d. Other information deemed confidential
- 6) Staff, volunteers, or students, will not leave confidential information in written form or displayed on computer terminals in locations where it may be seen by unauthorized persons. Confidential files shall not be removed from SACHA unless legally compelled to do so; e.g., by court order.
- 7) Where possible, SACHA members will avoid sending confidential information via facsimile or email.
- 8) SACHA members shall ensure filing cabinets/offices containing confidential information are locked at the end of each work day.
- 9) Staff, volunteers, or students who have confidential information in their possession outside of the office related to their work on the 24 Hour Support Line, will make every reasonable effort to prevent unauthorized persons from seeing the material: phone bills which include callers' phone numbers will be shredded as soon as possible; current volunteer phone lists will be stored carefully; old phone lists will be shredded, etc.
- 10) Violation of this policy is grounds for disciplinary action up to and including dismissal for staff, students, and volunteers.

