

9.1 CLIENT PRIVACY, CONFIDENTIALITY & RELEASE OF INFORMATION

POLICY

In the course of delivering its services and programs, SNF Development Center collects personal information from its clients. Personal information means any information that could be used on its own, or with other information, to establish the identity of a client, the client's service provider or the client's substitute decision maker. Personal information also includes any other information about a client including information that is contained in a client record.

SNF Development Center collects, uses and shares client's personal information for the following purposes:

- Providing quality programs and services to clients
- Providing information to other people or organizations with client consent (for example, making a referral for service)
- Contacting clients or members to evaluate SNF Development Center service and work
- Conducting research to understand the kinds of issues our clients are facing
- Contacting individuals about our fundraising and membership activities
- Reviewing client files to ensure high quality of service and documentation

SNF Development Center may also collect, use and share personal information with consent or as permitted or required by law.

SNF Development Center is committed to protecting the privacy of its clients and ensuring that:

- the personal information it receives from clients is kept safe, secure, confidential, accurate and up to date
- clients understand why their personal information is collected by SNF Development Center
- SNF Development Center obtains client consent before collecting, using, sharing or releasing client information, except as set out in this policy or permitted or required by law
- only the personal information necessary for the purposes listed above is collected from clients, unless otherwise consented to by the client or permitted or required by law
- access to client information is limited to the SNF Development Center employees involved in delivering services to clients
- any external agents to whom SNF Development Center releases information have a need to know and only use and disclose client information for the purposes for which it was originally provided
- clients are able to withdraw their consent at any time to the collection, use and disclosure of their personal information
- complaints about SNF Development Center privacy policies and procedures are handled efficiently and effectively
- all legal and regulatory requirements regarding client information are met and maintained

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SNF Development Center personnel may ask clients to voluntarily provide their health card / insurance details in order to facilitate referrals to provincially funded health resources.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all SNF Development Center students.

PROCEDURES

1. Obtaining Consent

- As SNF Development Center services often involve collaboration and consultation among employees, SNF Development Center employees will discuss the following with new clients:
 - the nature and extent of consultation and collaboration in the SNF Development Center program or service which the new client is accessing
 - the personal information that SNF Development Center may collect
 - the purposes for which SNF Development Center collects, uses and shares personal information, as listed above
- Client's rights and responsibilities including rights related to keeping client's personal information private will be reviewed with all new clients at their first appointment following intake
- Clients will be asked to use a form indicating that the organization's privacy policies have been discussed and that the client consents to the collection, use and sharing of personal information for the purposes listed in this policy.
- The signed forms will be maintained by the program (e.g., in the client's paper record, filed centrally within the program). A note will be made in the client's electronic record that the form has been signed.
- Consent will be that of the parent/guardian of a student of SNF Development Center and must be knowledgeable, relate to the personal information and not be obtained through deception or coercion. A consent to the collection, use or sharing of personal health information about the client is that they know the purpose of the collection, use/disclosure in certain circumstances and that they can give or withhold consent.
- In the event that employees are concerned that a client does not have the capacity to consent to the collection, use and disclosure of his or her personal information, employees should:
 - Consider whether the client understands the decision they are being asked to make
 - Consult with the program coordinator

2. Client Withholding, Limiting or Withdrawing Consent

- Clients have the right to stipulate who will have access to their personal information. This means that they can withhold, limit or withdraw their consent to the collection, use or disclosure of personal information. The request may cover all or a specific part of a client's record.
- Electronic records: The SNF Development Center employee receiving the client's request to withhold, limit or withdraw their consent will:

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- Record the verbal instructions by the client in an activity note in the client's electronic record
 - Scan any written instructions by the client into the client's electronic record
- Paper records: If the client also has a paper file:
 - The client's file (either in whole or in part depending on the client's instructions) to which access is to be limited will be placed inside an envelope that will be sealed with the instructions from the client stapled to the outside of the file. If the client's request is to withdraw consent, the file will be safeguarded by the Program Coordinator. If the client's request is to withhold or limit consent, the Program Coordinator will determine how best to comply with the client's request.
- In cases where the withholding, limiting or withdrawal of consent will limit or prevent SNF Development Center from continuing to deliver services, employees will discuss with the client the consequences of their withholding, limiting or withdrawal of consent.

3. Release of Information with Client Consent

- Personal information, whether all or part of a client record, will not be released to third parties without the written consent of the client or the client's substitute decision maker, where applicable. SNF Development Center may disclose a client's personal information, provided that the disclosure, to the best of SNF Development Center knowledge, is for a lawful purpose.
- Reports from third parties contained in a client record may not be released without the written consent of the third party.
- In exceptional circumstances, where written consent is not possible, the oral consent of the client to the release of personal information will be accepted and will be recorded in the client's file.
- In response to requests to release information to third parties, the SNF Development Center service provider will ensure that the client understands the purpose for which the information is being released and to whom the information is being released. The SNF Development Center service provider will also explain that **SNF Development Center cannot guarantee the confidentiality of the information once it has been released.**

4. Safeguarding of Personal Information

- Client information stored electronically is protected by password. Access to the SNF Development Center electronic database is limited on a need-to-know basis for added security.
- Client information collected in hard copy form is stored in locked cabinets accessible only by the counsellors or other SNF Development Center employees providing service to the client, and the Program Coordinator.
- Access to client information will be limited to those who need to know the information for the purposes set out in the client's consent or as otherwise permitted or required by law.
- SNF Development Center employees will never leave client personal information, in paper or electronic form, unattended or exposed to anyone other than the client.
- SNF Development Center will not send confidential personal information to clients by email without the client's prior consent.

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