**Confidentiality Policy**

**Agency Policy for employee & volunteers:**

The identities of our current and former clients, their personal communications to us, and their records are confidential by law. Family Services requires that confidentiality laws be strictly followed. We cannot expect to treat our clients effectively unless they feel that they can talk freely without concern that their confidences will be revealed to others. Any employee or volunteer of this organization who violates a client’s confidentiality is subject to immediate dismissal. Further, that employee or volunteer, as well as the organization, is subject to a lawsuit brought by the client.

**DO NOT:**

Reveal a client’s identity in any way.

Address client by name when others are in the office.

Disclose that a person is a client to anyone, including a client’s spouse.

Leave a client’s file unattended on your desk or anywhere else in the workplace.

Have files or appointment books on your desk or anywhere else in the workplace in a manner that allows a client’s name to be seen by others.

Have a client's information visible on a computer screen when you are away from your desk.

Leave computers and file cabinets that store client information unsecured.

Remove client files from the workplace for reasons other than authorized functions (for example, a home visit or court appearance).

Repeat anything a client tells you to anyone other than your supervisor

Talk about a client with anyone other than your supervisor in a private situation even if you do not use the client’s name.

Talk about a client with your spouse or other members of your family and friends.

Give copies of anything in a client’s chart to anyone other than your supervisor.

Retrieve message from your voice mail or answering machine within earshot of others.

In all instances where supervisor is mentioned above, work related case discussions with support/administrative staff, or a peer supervision apply as well.

**DO:**

Address clients in the workplace as “Sir” and “Ma’am” or other courteous address without the use of a client's name when other people are present.

Keep files and appointment books face down or otherwise out of view on your desk and throughout the workplace so that a client's name cannot be seen by others.

Safeguard your computer password to prevent unauthorized people from accessing client information

Strictly comply with a client’s permissions to disclose identity, confidences, or records when permission has been properly obtained in writing.

Observe all limits and conditions a client places on any permission to disclose confidential information.

Discard confidential materials properly by shredding them.

Consider a client’s confidentiality on the receiving end of fax communications, e-mail, and telephone message-taking devices; ensure that the intended recipient is the only recipient of such communications.

It is possible that requests for information—including subpoenas—about our client’s may come to you from police or other law enforcement personnel, lawyers, or the courts. Tell your supervisor immediately when you receive these types of request and determine with your supervisor how to proceed. Some exceptions to confidentiality may require or authorize certain disclosures about our clients. Immediately inform your supervisor of any information you obtain about our clients that leads you to believe that you, the client, or anyone else may be endangered by the client. Immediately inform your supervisor of any information you obtain that leads you to believe that a client may be involved in some way, directly or indirectly, in the abuse or neglect of a child, elderly person, or disabled person. Meet with your supervisor at once and determine how to proceed. Note that “following orders” may not be sufficient justification in a court of law for breaching confidentiality.

**Addendum-** **Parents As Teachers Program**

All current client files will be kept in locked filing cabinets in resource area of office. Each staff will have an area within those cabinets to keep their current files and supervisor will give access. Files closed within the past three years will also be kept in designated space within those cabinets. After three years, closed files will be kept in storage. At seven years after case is closed, files will be destroyed by on-site by shredding.

In addition to policy above regarding release of information, clients must sign an agency release form or give written consent before any disclosure of information or sharing of files. Upon signing Participation Agreement, clients will also be informed of Confidentiality Agreement. Confidentiality policy will be reviewed at new staff orientation and yearly at case management meetings.

Employees who have access to files are: Kelly Brown, Eve Bieber, Ada Sykes, Anneli Frank-Langer, Helen Dean, Kari Williams, & Marta Pecharo. This list will be updated with any staff changes.

*Revised 02/16/17*