

SD.4 RVCS Confidentiality & Release of Information

Purpose

The work of Robson Valley Community Services (RVCS) involves supporting individuals and families. Establishing trust is critical to the work and to building effective therapeutic relationships. Part of establishing trust is ensuring that all information gathered about individuals is kept confidential unless the individual has provided free and informed consent for it to be released or there is a legal duty to release the information in accordance with Canadian law.

Definitions

Personal Information – any information about an identifiable individual, including name, age, physical characteristics, address, phone number, ethnicity, sexual orientation, medical information, marital status, religion, education and employment information.

Policy Statement

RVCS will keep private and confidential all personal information of individuals it serves, ensuring that the collection and release of information conforms to its policies and to all applicable laws.

Procedures

1. The collection of personal information must conform to applicable privacy legislation, including the Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA) of British Columbia.
2. All personal information collected will be for the express purpose of effectively and efficiently providing the services delivered by RVCS.
3. All releases of personal information about clients to persons or organizations outside of the RVCS will require a written consent, apart from the following specific circumstances:
 - a. Releases of a child's information who is under the age of 12 to their legal guardian as part of ongoing service delivery.
 - b. An order made by a court, including a subpoena.
 - c. Instances where staff have observed or have become aware of a criminal act, including instances of reportable child abuse.
 - d. Instances where staff reasonably believe that a client and/or their family member may pose an imminent risk of harm to themselves or to another individual.
4. All releases of personal information require written consent from the client and/or their legal guardian(s). All such releases must include:
 - a. The name of the person about whom information is to be released.
 - b. The specific content to be released.
 - c. To whom the information is to be released.
 - d. The purpose for which the information is to be released.
 - e. The date on which the release is signed.
 - f. The date, event, or condition upon which the authorization expires (one year unless otherwise noted).
 - g. Information as to how and when the authorization can be revoked.
 - h. The signature of the person who is legally authorized to sign the release.
5. All personal information of clients and their family members/legal guardians served by RVCS will be kept in locked, secured locations (physical or digital) and accessible only as required for staff to carry out their job duties. Employees viewing personal information on computer screens will ensure that this is being carried out in private areas and information is not viewed by any person who is not an employee of RVCS.
6. RVCS prohibits the unsecured electronic transmission of any form of identifying personal information. This includes by email or text messaging services.

7. Confidential documents or documents containing personal information no longer required will be disposed of as required by law or in contracts where specified.
8. Employees will sign statements confirming their commitment to uphold the confidentiality policy upon hire and on an annual basis thereafter at the time of their performance appraisal meeting.
9. Breach of confidentiality by a staff will result in disciplinary action, which may include dismissal.
10. Retaliation (acting) against any client or staff person reporting a breach of confidentiality is strictly prohibited.