

BASIC PRINCIPLES OF CONFIDENTIALITY

1. Clients have a right to the protection of confidential and private information about themselves. This right may be superseded only in exceptional situations (i.e. where it is necessary to protect the client or others against threat of suicide, homicide or child abuse). The Center Director must consider court subpoenas on a case by case basis. It may be necessary to consult with the national office of the Center for Women's Ministries.
2. All personal client information should be kept in a locked file. Only volunteers directly involved should have access to this file. Within the Center, client-entrusted confidences need protection from disclosure to any staff member or volunteer who is not essential for providing services to that client. It is sometimes helpful to discuss pertinent client information with other center counseling volunteers experienced in the area of the client's needs. Clients should sign a copy of the **Intra-agency Client Confidentiality Policy**, granting or withholding permission.
3. Clients are usually the primary source of information about themselves; their consent is obtained before information is sought from other sources. In the event you need to talk to others—other agencies, pastors, or family members—have the client sign a completed **Permission to Collect/Release Information Form**. Confidential information is not communicated to anyone outside the Center without this written consent of the client or other legal authority. The Center receiving a confidential report on a client from another agency or individual does not have the right to divulge this information to a third party without securing the client's written permission for each occasion.
4. Don't talk to a client about personal needs in the front office, or in front of any person not directly involved in her counseling. If a client initiates personal conversation in the presence of an uninvolved person, suggest, "If you want to talk confidentially about this, we can move to another room."
5. The use of a case record for research or training purposes is not a breach of confidentiality, provided the identity of the client and her family has been effectively disguised.
6. At times, photographs and human-interest stories may be needed to publicize and promote the agency. The client must give her permission first and sign a **Publicity Release Form**.
7. The CWM discourages any involvement in child custody disputes.
8. **If an interested party calls about a client, say, "I cannot release information as to who clients are or anything about them without their permission. However, if you need to tell me something, I will listen to you."**