

CatholicCare Release of Information Policy and Procedure

Commitment

CatholicCare maintains that privacy and confidentiality is the cornerstone to any good support relationship. In order to create an atmosphere of trust and to invite disclosure the client needs to be assured that they have a degree of control on information exchange. Release of Information helps to ensure that the consumer has a degree of control on the information exchange.

Basis/Standard

All programs that work with client's personal information will have a current release of information form instructing the areas where a release of personal details is permissive.

Staff should be aware that personal information should not be disclosed for any purpose, other than the purpose for which it was collected, unless that purpose for the disclosure is directly related to the original purpose of the collection of the information and the individual would reasonably expect disclosure.

CatholicCare staff may also disclose when:

- the individual consents to the disclosure
- the non - sensitive information is used for marketing or health research
- it believes the disclosure will lesson or prevent a serious or imminent threat to an individual's life, health, safety
- it believes the disclosure will lesson or prevent a serious or imminent threat to the public's health and safety; or
- it believes the disclosure will assist in the investigations of any unlawful activity.

Procedure

- Consent forms must be completed for release of personal information. Consent forms may vary for each CatholicCare Service to comply with funding requirements.
- The consent forms need to have an end date where the form needs renewing to ensure the release is still allowed.
- If the form is to be faxed then the other people or businesses that are on the form need to be hidden, or only one release per form. This is particularly important with situations like sexual assault or medical issues.

- Staff and volunteers can only release personal information of consumers/clients to other people such as family members, other organisations or other CatholicCare services with the individual's written permission in advance.
- Where the client is unable to give release of information due to comprehension issues the program needs to devise a way to ensure the clients guardian or advocate is involved in this process.
- Statistical information will be gathered for reports and department reporting, however this will be done in a way which does not identify any individual. If there is a requirement from the contract or funding body to identify individuals then the clients will be informed of this situation when coming onto the program.
- Where there is no consent form, the approval of the Program Director or Manager must be obtained.

Key Performance Indicators

- All programs will have current release of information forms for all clients/consumers that are involved in their program.
- Information will not be exchanged without a release of information form.
- A duty of care situation which supersedes a release of information will be discussed with the coordinator/manager.

Relevant Documentation

- Privacy Act 1988
- CatholicCare Duty of Care policy and procedure
- CatholicCare File Management policy and procedure
- CatholicCare Subpoena policy and procedure
- Release of Information forms
- Contract specific release of information policies and procedures where required

Records

- Completed Release of Information forms
- Client/consumer case notes