

# Service Support Statement

# Privacy and Confidentiality



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## Introduction

Gunnedah Family Support (GFS) is committed to protecting and upholding your right to privacy. In particular, GFS is committed to protecting and upholding your right to privacy in the way it collects, stores and uses the information you provide us in order to support you.

## What information does GFS collect?

GFS will only collect the information required for us to assist you.

Information collected includes, but is not limited to:

- personal information (including Centrelink Statement, proof of ID documents)
- referrals received from another agency or professional
- information you provide in order for us to conduct an assessment of your needs
- your case plan
- the services provided
- referrals made and their outcome, progress notes, including results of case conferences, your feedback and any action taken.

Records such as correspondence received and sent, letters, emails and text messages sent to you or regarding you, completed referrals forms and minutes of case conference, will be scanned and uploaded to your client record so that a comprehensive client record is maintained.

## How is my information stored?

Gunnedah Family Support aims to store most client and organisational information electronically to increase information accessibility and minimise unnecessary use of paper. A client file is created when the client enters the service. Client information is recorded using the electronic Client Information Management System (CIMS). Paper client files are only established and maintained to keep copies of original documents (e.g. letters with signatures).

## **Who can access my information?**

The Manager of GFS is responsible for ensuring that all staff employed by GFS and all contractors providing services are aware of their responsibilities when handling your confidential information. Only authorised staff can access electronic and hardcopy information about you.

All staff employed by GFS are required to sign a Confidentiality Agreement with details their responsibilities for ensuring the privacy and confidentiality of everyone assisted by GFS.

You will always be asked for your signed consent before GFS staff share your information with any other party. However, GFS is a prescribed body under the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection Act) 1998* (the Care Act). This means if there is some concern for the welfare of a child under 16yrs, information relevant to the welfare of a child or children can be shared under Chapter 16a without consent.

## **What about the security of my records and information?**

The Manager of GFS will ensure that only authorised staff can access electronic and hardcopy information about you. GFS ensures this by requiring the following:

- All GFS computers are password protected.
- Access to CIMS requires two factor authentication.
- Hardcopy files are kept in a locked filing cabinet.
- Files will only be removed from the filing cabinet when the relevant staff member is actively using the file and will be immediately returned to the filing cabinet when not in use.
- If a staff member is required to take your information out of the office and transport it, either as a paper record or on an electronic device, then the electronic device will be password protected and the paper file will be transported in a secure bag with the staff member transporting it.

## **How are records stored, archived and disposed of?**

Electronic client information is retained and stored according to the Client Information System (CIMS) guidelines. As a general principle, files containing private information are destroyed seven years after you cease to receive services, unless there is a reason to retain the record (e.g. a court case). All paper-based confidential documents that are eligible to be disposed will be shredded.

The retention of information with long-term or historical value may be required for evidential or legal purposes. For more information about document retention periods, see the 4.1.3 Filing and Records Management Procedure V0.5 which provides a comprehensive guide on the retention and disposal of records.

If an electronic record is lost, altered or damaged through a data breach, then the relevant staff member will notify the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC) and the Department of Communities and Justice.

## Privacy for Interviews and personal Discussions

To ensure privacy for clients or staff when discussing sensitive or personal matters, the organisation will provide private interview spaces.

### What if I am not happy or would like to complain?

GFS takes the responsibility of protecting your privacy very seriously and welcomes your feedback on how we are doing in this regard. You have the right to make a complaint if you feel that your privacy has been breached. A complaint can be made verbally, in writing or via email and wherever possible will be resolved as soon as possible. For more information about making a complaint, please refer to the Feedback and Complaints, Service Statement.

### Related Policies and Legislation.

GFS Policy	Hyperlink
Service Support Statement (Feedback and Complaints)	
3.1.10 Privacy Policy V03	
4.1.3 Filing and Records Management Procedure V0.5	
Relevant Legislation	Hyperlink
Privacy Act 1988	<a href="http://legislation.gov.au">Privacy Act 1988 (legislation.gov.au)</a>
Privacy Amendment (Notifiable Data Breaches) Act 2017	<a href="http://legislation.gov.au">Privacy Amendment (Notifiable Data Breaches) Act 2017 (legislation.gov.au)</a>
<a href="#">Chapter 16A</a> of the <i>Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection Act) 1998</i> (the Care Act)	<a href="http://nsw.gov.au">What is Information Exchange? (16A) (nsw.gov.au)</a>