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**Barrhead & District FCSS Society**

**CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY**

The following principles shall apply to all persons associated with Barrhead & District Family and Community Support Services Society who have access to information as a result of the performance of their duties. FCSS recognizes the need to ensure all confidentiality to those it serves. Ensuring the confidentiality of privilege information is an important component of responsible and professional services delivery.

During the course of service of clients, Society representatives (employees, Board members, volunteers, students) may require information that, while voluntarily shared, is privileged information. As part of service delivery, it is necessary to share some or all of the information within the workplace. The underlying principle is that all information related to an identified individual must be treated as confidential. This means that information of a confidential nature that is given, read, observed, overheard or otherwise acquired will be held as privileged information. It also means that Society personnel will not carry on a conversation about clients in the presence of persons who have no official need to know. Disclosure outside the workplace would occur only when proper authorization has been received or when there is reasonable ethical or legal reason to do so.

It is important for clients to be made aware that some acquired information may be shared with Society personnel who have a reasonable need for specific information in the performance of their duties.

While principles, which follow, will cover most circumstances, there may be situations which will require the consultation and advice of the Executive Director.

1. All Society personnel, including Board members, are required to read the Society Confidentiality Policy, discuss any concerns with the Executive Director, and sign a form indicating that they have read and understand the policy and promise to adhere to it. This signing will be witnessed by a third party. It is important to note that confidentiality extends not only for the duration of involvement with the Society, but continues indefinitely once the relationship with the Society has ceased.
2. Violations of the Society Confidentiality Policy shall result in appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal. Breaches in Policy by employees, volunteers or students shall be dealt with by the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors.
3. Any person disciplined as a result of a breach in confidentiality has the right to appeal the decision with the Board of Directors.
4. Society personnel will not disclose information about one person to a partner, family member or friend, unless informed written consent of the person who disclosed the information has been obtained.
5. In instances where it is important for appropriate service to the client to share information with an external professional, client consent will be obtained before sharing any information.
6. In the process of service, Society representatives may be faced with circumstances that call for professional judgement regarding confidentiality. Some situations may require that action be taken and that confidential information be shared, with or without the consent of the client. Such situations may include the following:

* Need for immediate medical attention
* Signs of psychiatric disturbance
* Thoughts or threats of suicide, homicide or other violent crimes
* Statements of intent to engage in criminal activity or admission of guilt
* Indications that a child is at risk

In these cases, the following principles supersede the individual’s right to confidentiality.

7. When there is a reasonable belief that a danger exists and that intervention is warranted to protect someone, a referral to the appropriate authorities shall be made. All steps taken will be documented and placed on file with the Executive Director.

8. E**xcep**t when, required by law or judicial action, the written, information consent of the client (or guardian) shall be obtained prior to the release of information to another agency, individual or organization.

9. Written permission will be received before the name or photograph of a client can be used in promotion materials. Clients’ names will be made available for interviews only after consent has been obtained.

10. Information shall be provided to law enforcement officials or the court upon a valid and enforceable subpoena. Legal counsel for the Society shall be notified and Society personnel shall proceed according to the advice of counsel or at the direction of the Executive Director.

11. Disclosure of privileged information may need to occur in order to counter formal allegations of malpractice, negligence or conduct unbecoming of a professional. While justified disclosure must be limited to the issue at hand and not exceed what is necessary to the situation. Legal counsel for the Society shall be notifies and provided with information. The Society shall proceed according to the advice of counsel.

12. Students placed in the Society for field practice are bound by the same policies regarding confidentiality as are the staff, Board members and volunteers of the Society.

Signature:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_