

ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

Confidentiality

31-8-5

Policy

The Department of Children and Families shall protect adult and child client information in its records in accordance with applicable state and federal law. Client information includes hard copy and electronic documentation, emails and audio- and videotapes depicting clients.

A client's consent is generally required in order to disclose information to another agency or individual. Disclosure of information without a client's consent is sometimes authorized, however, and, in some cases, mandated by statute.

If there is any doubt about whether certain information can be disclosed, a legal consultation shall be sought.

Legal Reference: Conn. Gen. Stat. §17a-28

Release of Information

There are two approved forms to authorize the release of information to or from DCF:

- [DCF-2131 T, "Authorization for Release of Information to the Department of Children and Families"](#)
- [DCF-2131 F, "Authorization for Release of Information from the Department of Children and Families"](#)

DCF-2131T shall be used when a DCF employee is seeking to obtain records from another agency, person or provider.

DCF-2131F shall be used when DCF is being asked to disclose records to another agency, person or provider.

Procedures for Disclosure by Social Workers, Solnit and CJTS Staff

Social Workers, Solnit Center North and South staff and CJTS staff may disclose client information, in either verbal or documentary form, in the normal course of their duties to:

- the client in an open case;
- a client's parent or legal guardian in an open case;
- a client's attorney or other authorized representative in an open case;
- other DCF staff with a business reason to know;
- an Assistant Attorney General;
- the Superior Court for Juvenile Matters or a Probate Court for purposes of a court hearing related to a specific case; and
- any third party for whom there is a signed and current release of information from the client or the client's authorized representative.

All other requests for client information shall be forwarded to DCF Office of Legal Affairs staff or an Assistant Attorney General for advice and, when appropriate, redaction.

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Procedures for Disclosure by Other DCF Staff

DCF staff who are not included in the preceding section shall discuss all requests for client records and information with DCF Office of Legal Affairs staff prior to dissemination.

Loss of Confidential Information

If an employee suspects or is aware that any confidential information has been lost or stolen, the loss or theft must immediately be reported to the employee's supervisor. The employee shall also immediately follow the DCF Loss Reporting Procedure as outlined in [DCF Policy 12-16, "Loss Reporting Procedures"](#).

Such lost information may be in either hard copy form or in electronic form. Such loss or theft includes the loss or theft of a laptop computer or other electronic device.

Employees shall make every effort to safeguard all confidential data.

Cross reference: [DCF Policy 12-10-3, "Acceptable Use and Sanction Policy."](#)

Reporting Requirements for Breach of Confidentiality

Any DCF employee with knowledge of a breach of this confidentiality policy shall report the breach to the Agency Legal Director immediately. The Agency Legal Director shall notify the Commissioner and the Director of Human Resources.

Legal reference: Conn. Gen. Stat. §17a-28.

Consequences of Unauthorized Disclosure of Client Information

The possible consequences for the unauthorized disclosure of client information are severe:

- disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment;
 - arrest and prosecution and, if found guilty, a fine of up to \$1,000 and/or imprisonment for up to one year; and
 - liability in a civil lawsuit, for which the Office of the Attorney General may or may not provide legal representation in its discretion.
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