
Confidentiality Policy**No. 500.10**

Bethesda Mission is committed to protecting the confidentiality and privacy of: 1) individuals who seek or receive services through its various ministries; 2) donors and information about their donation/gift; and 3) employees. Staff, volunteers, Board members, and student interns with access to confidential, private or sensitive information are not to divulge, disclose or provide confidential information to any other person unless authorized to do so. Confidential and/or private information may not be discussed in an inappropriate way, including chatting with a co-worker in the cafeteria or other public area, telling friends in a social setting, or with family members.

Confidential information may be in various forms, such as written, electronic, oral, overheard or observed. Examples of confidential or private information include, but are not limited to:

Program participant information:

- Individually identifying information such as address, contact information, date of birth, social security number, medications, criminal history.
- Any written or spoken information shared in confidence between a guest and a counselor.
- Any advice, report, or working paper (including electronically maintained records) given or made by the counselor.
- Medical records.
- Documents received from other agencies (for which a guest had to execute a written release).

Staff information:

- Personal information including home address, personal telephone numbers, date of birth, and social security number.
- Personnel records including pre-employment screenings, salary, performance reviews, taxes, garnishments and disciplinary actions.
- Medical and benefit records.

Donors, volunteers, Board members and student intern information:

- Personal information, including home address, personal telephone numbers, date of birth and social security number.

Other:

- Donor lists, payroll records, emails, electronic records, Board meeting minutes, budgets.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

All staff, volunteers, Board members, and student interns require certain information to perform their duties at Bethesda Mission. Access to all confidential information is granted on a need-to-know basis. A need-to-know basis is defined as information access that is required in order to perform work or volunteer duties or to complete approved academic requirements. Confidential information may be used to the extent necessary to perform one's authorized duties at Bethesda Mission, and the level of access required is determined by the person's job responsibilities. All confidential information remains the property of Bethesda Mission. The obligation to maintain confidentiality of private information continues after employment or service ends at Bethesda Mission.

UNAUTHORIZED DISCLOSURE OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

Bethesda Mission takes the confidentiality and privacy of information seriously. The unauthorized access to, modification, deletion or disclosure of confidential or private information may compromise the integrity of the Mission's written or electronic records and violates individual rights of confidentiality and privacy which may constitute a criminal act. Bethesda Mission will not tolerate unauthorized disclosure or use of confidential or private information and will not hesitate to take disciplinary action, up to and including immediate dismissal, against any employee that violates this policy. Volunteers, Board members and student interns violating this policy shall also be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from their duties or academic program at Bethesda Mission. Management will determine the appropriate discipline based on the circumstances.

WRITTEN AGREEMENT TO MAINTAIN CONFIDENTIALITY

All staff is required to sign a written agreement (Attachment 1) to maintain confidentiality which will be placed in their personnel files. As part of their application placed in their individual files, volunteers, Board members, and student interns will agree to maintain confidentiality of information.

RELEASING INFORMATION

- For program participants, see Ministry Operations Directive 800.01-Release of Information about Guests.
- For youth, see Ministry Operations Directive 800.12-Youth Center Activity Participation.
- For staff, see Human Resources Directive 700.08-Employment Policies.
- Dissemination of all other confidential information requires management approval.