

## **How Community Options Brokerage Service Deals With Your Health and Privacy Information**

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### **What happens to information about me?**

When you become a client of this service a health and information record is created. It includes your name, address, contact details and information about your health and other personal information. Every time you attend or have contact with us, new information is added to your record. This allows all workers involved with your care and well being to access your information easily and quickly when it is needed.

Your personal information is stored securely at this service. We will keep your client file for a minimum of 7 years after your last visit. The record will then be disposed of securely, as required by law.

### **Why is this information necessary?**

We need to collect and keep this information to provide you with suitable health care and support. Your client file can help us to quickly identify which course of action is likely to be safe and effective for you. It will also lessen the need to collect the same information over and over again.

Some information may also be used for research and planning, to help us provide better health outcomes for the whole community. In this case, any identifying information, such as your name and contact details, will be removed before the information is used.

### **What rights do I have to access my client information?**

You can ask to see any information held on your client file. This may include viewing the information, getting a summary or in some cases a fuller copy of your record, or having information explained to you if you wish or to an authorized representative acting on your behalf. Some limits may apply where particular circumstances prevent us from releasing information. If any limits apply to your record, this will be explained to you.

You also have the right to correct any information in your record that you believe to be incorrect, incomplete, out of date or misleading. You cannot ask that information held on your client file be removed, though you may ask that a correcting statement

be added to it. For information on how you may request access and/or correction, please speak to one of our staff.

### **How will my information remain confidential?**

We have strict policies about who can see and use your personal information. All our staff members must treat your information confidentially. Law also protects your privacy. Generally, we only share personal or health information about you with people who are directly involved in your ongoing care and programs, for the purpose of a particular level of care or specific program. If we need to share your information for any other purpose we will ask for your agreement before doing so (unless otherwise required by law).

### **What if I am unable to give consent?**

In some cases, clients may not be able to give consent because they are legally unable to make a decision about release of their information (for example, young people (children), people with a severe illness or major injury, or those with a mental illness or other disability). In such cases, a decision will be sought from the client's authorised representative. Law specifies people who can act as authorised representatives in these circumstances.

### **Who may have access to information about me?**

We may recommend that other professionals outside this service become involved in your care or program. In that case, you will be asked to give consent for us to disclose any necessary information from your health record to the other health care services, to help them assess your needs and provide you with relevant care.

Sharing information in this way helps us to provide you with effective services, and lessens the need for you to repeat your personal or health information to each new provider. Please note that you do have the right to refuse consent if you wish. If you have any concerns or questions about sharing of information, please speak to one of our staff.

### **When can information be disclosed to other people without my consent?**

There are very few situations when your information may be shared without your consent. For example, in an emergency situation, we would have to release medical information about you to aid emergency treatment.

Also, in certain circumstances, this service may be required by law to release personal information about you. Examples include:

- Reporting of notifiable diseases to the Department of Human Services; or

- Providing records to a court when required in relation to legal proceedings;
- Providing records to a law enforcement agency (e.g. police) in response to a search warrant.

If any of these circumstances apply, we will advise you as close as we can to the time when the information is released.

### **What do I do if I have any complaints?**

If at any time, you have a question about the way your personal information is being managed, or you have a complaint in relation to privacy or confidentiality of your information, please contact us. If you are not satisfied with the way in which we handle your information or deal with your concerns you may make a formal complaint to the Health Services Commissioner on 8601 5225.

#### **Complaint and enforcement mechanisms**

A person who believes that his/her privacy has been breached may complain to the Health Services Commissioner, who may attempt to conciliate the complaint. If conciliation fails, the complainant may take the complaint to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT). VCAT can make binding determinations to resolve the complaint.

### **Who do I contact at COBS for more information?**

**CEO**

**Or**

**Program Management Staff**

**Both can be contacted on (02) 6056 1932**