

Privacy and Confidentiality

Policy: Refuge House protects the rights to privacy and confidentiality of protected information of all individuals (foster/adoptive children, foster/adoptive parents and residents and personnel) by protecting confidential information and ensuring appropriate releases are obtained and only authorized information is provided to authorized individuals. Refuge House ensures that policies, procedures and practices comply with guidelines set forth in the Texas Administrative Code (TAC Chapter 749), DFPS requirements, Texas contract requirements, HIPAA guidelines and any legal obligations set forth by the court of jurisdiction for each foster/adoptive child/young adult placed in care.

Confidentiality Agreement

The following confidentiality statement and agreement is provided to any service-provider, care-provider or employee of Refuge House prior to exposure to any confidential information.

“It is the policy of Refuge House that service-providers, care-providers and employees of Refuge House may not disclose, divulge, or make accessible confidential information belonging to, or obtained through their affiliation with Refuge House to any person, including relatives, friends and business and professional associates, other than to persons who have a legitimate need for such information and to whom Refuge House has authorized disclosure. Service-providers, care-providers and employees shall use confidential information solely for the purpose of performing services as a service-provider, care-provider or employee for Refuge House. This policy is not intended to prevent disclosure where disclosure is required by law.

Except for certain specified circumstances, Texas Law and Federal regulations require that all childcare records which directly or indirectly identify a client, former client or potential client of any Refuge House, facility shall be kept confidential. This includes a prohibition against providing any information, including names and electronic images of past or current foster/adoptive children on social networking sites.

I understand that violation of this confidentiality requirement can result in immediate dismissal from my duties as a employee, service-provider, care-provider or volunteer with Refuge House subject to the discretion of the Executive Team of Refuge House. I may also be liable for both civil and criminal penalties.

I agree to conform to all rules and regulations of Refuge House and all of those agencies and departments placing children with Refuge House to the best of my ability, and to respect the confidential nature of all case records and my personal contracts with clients.

Service-providers, care-providers and employees must exercise good judgment and care at all times to avoid unauthorized or improper disclosures of confidential information. Conversations in public places, such as restaurants, elevators, and airplanes, should be limited to matters that do not pertain to information of a sensitive or confidential nature. In addition, service-providers, care-providers and employees should be sensitive to the risk of inadvertent disclosure and should for example, refrain from leaving confidential information on desks or otherwise in plain view and refrain from the use of speakerphones to discuss confidential information if the conversation could be heard by unauthorized persons. Refuge House does not permit foster/adoptive parents to create relationships on social networking sites, except for the Refuge House sponsored community/site page. This includes biological parents, DFPS workers, CASA workers, or RH Staff unless specifically approved by Management.

At the end of a service-provider’s or care-provider’s term or contract or upon the termination of an employee’s employment, he or she shall return all documents, papers, and other materials, regardless of medium, that may contain or be derived from confidential information in his or her possession.”