

# INFORMATION SHARING: Guidelines for promoting safety and wellbeing



## Early intervention by sharing information



### 10 top practice tips

- 1** Whether you are sharing information or being asked to share with someone else, our top tip is to be familiar with the two page **ISG practice guide and decision making flow chart**. All of your decision-making will be guided by that.
- 2** When you become aware of risk of harm or threats to wellbeing, consider the consequences for the individual or others if information is **not** shared.
  - > Is it likely that risk of harm may increase if services aren't coordinated now?
  - > What information do you have that might initiate or support services? Sometimes it's knowing the right question to ask.
  - > Might your client pose a risk to himself/herself, to other family members or a risk to public health or public safety?
  - > If information is not shared, will an individual or group be at increased risk of harm from others or from themselves?
- 3** Be open and honest with the person (or where appropriate their family) from the outset. Tell them why, what, how and with whom their information will, or could, be shared. Seek their agreement, unless it is clearly unsafe or not possible to do so.
- 4** Whenever you are considering sharing without consent or refusing to share information, seek advice and permission from the senior person within your organisation with the authority to make that decision, without disclosing the identity of your client where possible.
- 5** You can share information if your client has given you informed consent. Where possible, however, respect the wishes of those who do not consent to share confidential information.
- 6** Base your decision to share information on considerations of the safety and wellbeing of the client and others who may be affected by their actions. You may still share information without consent if, in your judgement (and with the approval of a manager), it is in the public interest to do so. Re-analyse the risk and consider what might happen for the individual or others if no one makes a referral or provides a service.

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Check that the information you share is:

- > necessary for the purpose for which you are sharing it
- > shared only with those people who need to have it
- > accurate and up-to-date
- > shared in a timely fashion
- > shared securely.

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Keep a record of your decision and the reasons for it. If you decide to share, then record:

- > what you have shared
- > with whom
- > for what purpose
- > any follow up action required.

If you decide not to share, record the request and the reasons for not sharing.

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You are obliged to give professional consideration to information sharing requests and record the reasons for declining but, in most circumstances, you cannot be forced to share client information. Information sharing only happens when you and the others involved agree that there is a legitimate purpose and a justified reason.

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New information will continually emerge as you work with your client. Be mindful that early intervention does not remove your ongoing obligation to notify such agencies as the Police, the Child Abuse Report Line or a Family Safety Meeting as soon as the prospect of imminent harm becomes apparent.

### ***For further information***

Website: [www.ombudsman.sa.gov.au/isg/](http://www.ombudsman.sa.gov.au/isg/)

Phone: 08 8226 8699 **Toll free** 1800 182 150 (outside metro SA only)

Email: [isg@ombudsman.sa.gov.au](mailto:isg@ombudsman.sa.gov.au)

### ***You might also find useful:***

HM Government UK (2006) [Information Sharing: Guidance for practitioners and managers](#)