

### 6.1.3 Privacy Policy

#### **Introduction**

We are committed to protecting the privacy of client information and to handling client's personal information in a responsible manner in accordance with the Australia Privacy Principles contained in the Privacy Act 1988 and relevant state and territory legislation (referred to as privacy legislation).

This Privacy Policy explains how we collect, use and disclose clients' personal information, how clients may access that information and how they may seek the correction of any information. It also explains how clients may make a complaints about a breach of privacy legislation.

From time to time we may make changes to our policy, processes and systems in relation to how we handle personal information. We will update this Privacy Policy to reflect any changes and the updated policy will be available on our website and in the practice.

#### **Collection**

We collect information that is necessary and relevant to provide clients with health care and treatment and manage LWCHC. This information may include your name, address, date of birth, sex, gender, health information, family history, credit card and contact details. This information may be stored on our computer health records system and in any hand written health records

Wherever practicable we will only collect information from you personally. However, we may need to collect information from other sources such as treating specialists, radiologists, pathologists, hospitals, allied health and other health care providers.

We collect information in various ways, such as over the phone or in writing, in person in the Centre and outreach locations or over the internet if clients transact with us online. This information may be collected by medical and non-medical staff.

In emergency situations we may need to collect information from clients' emergency contact people.

We are required by law to retain health records for certain periods of time depending on the clients' age at the time we provide services.

The collection statement informs clients about how their health information will be used including other organisations to which the Centre may disclose client health information and any law that requires the particular information to be collected. Client consent is obtained via signature on the client intake form at the time of first appointment at LWCHC. Verbal consent is then obtained by individual practitioners when the situation arises within

consultation. De-identified health and demographic data is collated and used for reporting to assist service delivery plans and funding and does not identify any individual.

In general, quality improvement or clinical audit activities for the purpose of seeking to improve the delivery of a particular treatment or service would be considered a directly related secondary purpose for information use or disclosure so that LWCHC does not need to seek specific consent for this use of clients' health information. (Refer Section 8 accreditation and continuous improvement)

We inform our clients about our Centre's policies regarding the collection and management of their personal health information via:

- A sign at reception
- Brochures in the waiting area
- Practice information sheet
- New clients 'consent form'
- Verbally
- Our websites: [www.lwchc.org.au](http://www.lwchc.org.au) and [www.womenpartners.org.au](http://www.womenpartners.org.au)

A copy of LWCHC privacy policy is located in the policy and procedure manual on the shared files, in hard copy in the manager's office and on the website. It is also available to clients on request.

LWCHC features the approved collection statement on the 'New Client' intake form.

*'Leichhardt Women's Community Health Centre (LWCHC), located at 55 Thornley Street Leichhardt (Tel. 9560 3011) collects your personal details and health information to ensure we deliver the best possible healthcare service. LWCHC adheres to the NSW Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002, the Australian Privacy Principles and our own strict standards. During your time at LWCHC your health information will be used to assist your care (eg. With your verbal consent health information may be shared if you are being referred to another practitioner) and as you may reasonably expect for the Centre's internal quality assurance and statistical purposes (which will not identify you in any way). Failure to provide accurate and comprehensive information could negatively affect your healthcare. You are entitled to access your health information at any stage by contacting the Centre. If you have any concerns regarding your privacy, please contact the Centre manager.'*

Prior to a client signing consent to the release of their health information clients are made aware they can request a full copy of our privacy policy and collection statement.

## **Use and Disclosure**

We treat personal information as strictly private and confidential. We will only use or disclose it for purposes directly related to the relevant person's health care and treatment, or in ways that clients would reasonably expect that we may use it for their ongoing care

and treatment. For Example, disclosure of blood tests results to a specialist or requests for x-rays.

There are circumstances where we may be permitted or required by law to disclose personal information to third parties. For examples. To Medicare, Police, insurers (subject to written patient consent), solicitors, government regulatory bodies, tribunals, courts of law, hospitals. We may also provide de-identified statistical data to third parties for research or quality improvement activities.

We may disclose information about a client to outside contractors to carry out activities on our behalf, such as an IT service provider, solicitor. In these instances we impose security and confidentiality requirements on how they handle personal information. Outside contractors are required to not use information for any purpose except for those activities we have asked them to perform.

### **Data Quality and Security**

We will take reasonable steps to ensure that personal information is accurate, complete, up to date and relevant. For this purpose, our staff ask clients to confirm that contact details and identification is correct. We request that clients let us know if any of the information we hold is incorrect or out of date.

Personal information that we hold is protected by:

- Securing our premises;
- Placing passwords and varying access levels on databased to limiting access and protect electronic information from unauthorized interference, access modification and disclosure; and
- Providing locked cabinets and secure rooms for the storage of physical records.

### **Corrections**

If a client believes that information we have about them is not accurate, complete or up-to-date, we ask that you contact us in writing or in person so that corrections can be made.

### **Access**

Clients are entitled to request access to their health records. We require the request is in writing and we will respond within a reasonable time.

There may be a fee for the administrative costs of retrieving and providing copies of health record.

We may deny access to health records in certain circumstances permitted by law, for example, if disclosure may cause a serious threat to the person's health or safety. We will always tell the person making the request why access is denied and the options they have to respond to our decision.

## **Complaints**

If a client has a complaint about the privacy of their person information, we request that they contact us in writing. Upon receipt of a complaint we will consider details and attempt to resolve it in accordance with our complaints handling procedures. The manager is responsible for investigating and responding to complaints. (See complaints Policy and Procedure)

If the person making the complaint is dissatisfied with our handling of a complaint or the outcome they make an application to the Australian Information Commissioner or the privacy commissioner in NSW. Refer Centre Administration/Complaints)

## **Overseas Transfer of Data**

We will not transfer your personal information to an overseas recipient with unless we have your consent or we are required to do so by law.

## **Contact**

please direct any inquiries, complaints, request for access to health records to:

The manager

Leichhardt Women's Community Health Centre

PO Box 240 Leichhardt NSW 2040 or [manager@lwchc.org.au](mailto:manager@lwchc.org.au)

Client consent for the transfer of health information to other providers or agencies is obtained via a signed transfer form or verbal consent within the consultation (verbal consent is documented in the clients health record by their practitioner. Documents which contain client health information sent to other health care providers, such as referrals, is discussed with clients prior to their distribution. All requests for access to health information by clients are documented and incorporated into the health record and another copy is filed in the request for access to client information folder which is stored in the compactus.