

## Introduction

The role of the Department of Health is to provide access to services that enhance and protect the health, social wellbeing and quality of life for the community.

Providing health services involves handling large quantities of personal information that is often highly sensitive.

There is growing community concern regarding privacy when providing personal information to any organisation and it is important that consumers have confidence that the Department will handle their personal information in a fair, secure and appropriate manner.

To achieve this, the Department has introduced a Code of Fair Information Practice.

The Code contains 10 Principles that provide guidance on all aspects of handling the personal information of clients. These Principles cover the

- collection
- use
- storage
- transfer, and
- disclosure

of personal information.

## What is personal information?

Personal information is more than name, address and date of birth, it is also:

*information or an opinion (including information or an opinion forming part of a database) whether true or not, and whether recorded in material form or not, about an individual whose identity is apparent, or can reasonably be ascertained, from the information or opinion*

This includes information from which the names and addresses have been removed, but where the identity of the individual could potentially be identified. For example, by way of a number or reference which, when combined with other information, can be related to an individual.

## What do the Principles mean for you?

- Collect information only if it is necessary to fulfil a legitimate function
- Ensure that the person concerned knows why you are collecting information and what you will do with it
- Use and disclose information only for the purpose for which the information was collected (primary purpose)

## What do the Principles mean for you cont...

- Seek consent from the individual prior to using or disclosing their information for purposes other than the primary purpose. If this is neither practicable nor possible, ensure that the Code permits the use or disclosure
- Ensure that information is accurate before using or disclosing it
- Make sure the information is stored securely and (where permitted under the State Records Act) destroyed, if it is no longer needed
- Be open with clients about your information handling practices
- Confirm a client's right to have access to, and seek to correct, information about them (in accordance with the *Freedom of Information Act*)
- Ensure that unique identifiers (for example Drivers License, Medicare or unit record numbers) are used only for their intended purpose
- Enable clients to exercise the option of remaining anonymous where this is lawful and practicable
- Implement security and privacy measures when transferring information to others

## Who needs to apply the Principles in the Code?

The Principles contained in the Code of Fair Information Practice are intended to apply to:

- All staff of the Department of Health (whether paid or not)
- All staff of funded service providers\* (including hospitals and non-government organisations) as well as any individual or organisation to whom they sub-contract work
- All consultants\*, contractors\* (including information technology (IT) contractors who process data on behalf of the Department) and sub-contractors\*
- Any private agencies\* or practitioners\*, researchers\* or others (including volunteers and students) who have authorised access to personal information collected by or for the Department of Health and funded service providers

\* The Code will be applied through provisions incorporated into service level agreements, contracts and undertakings.

## Further Information

This pamphlet provides a brief introduction to the Principles contained in the Code of Fair Information Practice for the Department of Health.

The Code provides a full text version of the Principles and explanatory notes. The Code and Information Sheets about the Code are available on the Health Intranet at:

<http://in.health.sa.gov.au/research-and-evaluation/code.asp>

This site also contains links to other privacy related sites that may be of interest.

Copies of the Code and Information sheets are also available from:

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