

# **Confidentiality Policy**

Revised July 2008

## **POLICY**

All information a client brings to Illawarra Women's Health Centre remains private between Illawarra Women's Health Centre and the woman. The exceptions to this are in the case of child protection (see Child Protection Policy) or intention to harm self or another person. Staff in these circumstances are required to inform the appropriate authorities (see Release of Information policy).

Illawarra Women's Health Centre's Confidentiality Policy should be carefully discussed with every new client and the worker should make sure that the client has understood.

Illawarra Women's Health Centre will make sure that all information gathered during service provision remains private and confidential. This will be achieved by:

- adherence to the Confidentiality Agreement signed by all workers and management members
- when women first contact the centre, all information will be received in private. If necessary, callers or visitors will be diverted to a private office for interview
- centre staff on reception will make sure that any telephone calls that are confidential are diverted to a private room, where required
- centre staff on reception will make sure that names and appointment times of clients are not seen by others at the reception desk
- where appropriate, ie in most cases, services will be delivered in private
- Illawarra Women's Health Centre respects the right of women to withhold information and remain anonymous if they wish
- consent will be obtained and recorded before discussing confidential information with people outside the centre, unless the law requires that such information be given or a staff member feels that a client is in danger of doing harm to themselves or others
- no information will be sought from another agency with which a woman has been involved without her expressed and, in most cases written, permission. Where written reports or letters are sent or received, the woman should either see or be given a copy and if necessary the contents be discussed explicitly with her
- within group work, all group facilitators of Illawarra Women's Health Centre will discuss and agree with women what information will be kept confidential and these agreements will be posted on the wall during group sessions and given to group members in a handout.

## **Limits of Confidentiality**

There are specific instances where confidentiality around a particular matter cannot be maintained, namely, the case of child abuse or neglect, stated intention to harm self or others, or disclosure regarding a *serious* crime. In these instances, staff are required *by law* to notify the appropriate authorities. Your medical record can also be subpoenaed to court, as can individual members of staff who are bound to be truthful witnesses.