**\_\_\_\_(LOCAL NAME)\_\_\_\_ Coordinated Entry Partnership**

**Attachment B: Confidentiality Principles & Policy**

The \_\_\_\_\_(LOCAL NAME)\_\_\_\_\_ Coordinated Entry Partnership shares the following principles of confidentiality and agrees to uphold these principles in our work together:

* Confidentiality principles allow for protecting each client’s right to privacy of personal and health information, while permitting access to information necessary to improve access to housing help.
* Confidentiality means that a staff person is free to talk about the work that they do (the program, position, etc) and the work of the \_\_\_\_\_(LOCAL NAME)\_\_\_\_\_ Coordinated Entry Partnership, but only permitted to share clients’ names or identifying information when permission is given through a signed Release of Information.
* All information specific to clients, or could be identifying, should be treated as confidential. General information about programs, policy statements or aggregate reports that are not identified with any individual or family are generally not classified as confidential.
* Confidentiality covers all methods of communication including, by email, phone, in-person, text, by all staff (volunteer and paid).
* Confidentiality means considering how everyday activities and the workplace environment ensure client privacy, such as printing and file access, phone conversations that might be overheard, etc.
* All clients should be given the option to have their information shared to help them access housing resources more quickly.
* A trusting relationship between a client and a service provider depends on assuring clients of confidentiality so that
  + Clients safely receive the help they need for the immediate situation
  + Clients feel confident in reaching out for help in the future
* All \_\_\_(LOCAL)\_\_\_ Coordinated Entry Partners must have their own internal written policy on client confidentiality. Staff at each agency are required to follow their agency’s confidentiality policies at all times. You may be allowed or required to share information internally at your agency without a client release of information, based on your own agency’s protocol and policy. Partners are encouraged to share agency confidentiality policies with each other.
* Additional information about confidentiality and HMIS data sharing is included in the Coordinated Entry Partnership Agreement and the local HMIS Data Sharing Agreement. All HMIS users are required to receive HMIS security training.
* **“Need to Know”:** Clients regularly share personal, private and health information during professional working relationships. It is not likely that all this information will need to be shared in order to support access to housing resources. Partner staff agree to exercise the utmost discretion and judgment to keep information sharing to the minimum required amount needed:
  + To determine the services that are necessary for a client
  + To facilitate obtaining resources to support a client’s housing and related needs
  + To coordinate services on behalf of a client and prevent duplication
* **“Nothing about me, without me”:** When sharing information, staff are encouraged to slow down, remind themselves of their specific support or coordinating role, and consider how to share information in a way that is respectful and client-centered. Sometimes clients are not present when their information is shared; in these situations, it can be helpful to ask, *what/how would I share if the client was here right now?*
* If a staff person feels that client confidentiality has been breached during Coordinated Entry, they should first address the issue with their supervisor. The \_\_\_\_\_(LOCAL NAME)\_\_\_\_\_ Coordinated Entry Partnership Committee will also review confidentiality principles and policies as needed, at least annually.

**HIPAA[[1]](#footnote-1)**

Because some Coordinated Entry Partners are health care providers or business associates, all information shared as part of Coordinated Entry should be done so in a manner that is compliant with state and federal law related to privacy and security of individually identifiable health information, including the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Protected personal health information includes:

* an individual’s demographic data
* individual’s past, present or future physical or mental health or condition (this includes information about disabilities, substance abuse, etc.)
* the provision of health care to the individual or the past, present, or future payment for health care
* Individual common identifiers (name, address, birth date, social security number).

**42 CFR Part 2[[2]](#footnote-2)**

42 CFR Part 2 are federal regulations that apply specifically to substance abuse and treatment and outline which information about a client’s treatment may be disclosed with and without the client’s consent. Some Coordinated Entry Partners may be programs covered by 42 CFR Part 2, and therefore, substance abuse education, prevention or treatment information maintained and shared as part of Coordinated Entry should be done so in a manner that follows 42 CFR Part 2. This set of regulations is incredibly important, as the fear of the stigma revolving around substance abuse often prevents individuals from seeking adequate services.

**VAWA and Victims of Domestic/Sexual Violence**

Domestic and Sexual Violence organizations participating in the Coordinated Entry Partnership may be receiving federal funding as part of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and/or Family Violence Prevention & Services (FVPSA) program. Therefore, all information shared as part of Coordinated Entry should be done so in a manner that is compliant with VAWA and FVPSA requirements; the Coordinated Entry release meets these requirements as it is written, informed and reasonably time-limited.

**The Coordinated Entry Release of Information (ROI) Form**

The Vermont Coalition to End Homelessness has created a standard Release of Information form that meets both HIPAA and 42 CFR Part 2 requirements. This form is a tool for clients to provide permission for their personal and health information to be shared and re-shared to secure help with housing.

* A staff person must review this form with a client. For help, use the Staff ROI Review tool.
* Each adult in a household must sign their own permission form.
* Providing permission to share information is voluntary. Clients may choose not to share some or all of their information. Not sharing information may delay or limit access to resources. For example, a client may need to set up intake appointments with multiple organizations.
* Clients should be given a list of all the Coordinated Entry Partners that will have permission to receive and share information about the client. Remember, not all information about a client needs to be provided to all providers at all times. Staff should review how and when information is typically shared.
* Clients should know how to revoke their permission.

The Housing Crisis Referral form has a separate, simple permission form which allows the referring agency to share information on the form with the local Coordinated Entry lead agency. This permission form does not allow for the re-disclosure of information.

**Training Resources**

* Helpful HIPAA checklists for providers from the Agency of Human Services:

<http://humanservices.vermont.gov/policy-legislation/hipaa/hipaa-provider-tools/checklists-for-privacy-and-security-compliance/hipaa-priv-prior-check>

<http://humanservices.vermont.gov/policy-legislation/hipaa/hipaa-provider-tools/checklists-for-privacy-and-security-compliance/hipaa-security-check>

* AHS Domestic Violence training: <https://www.ahsnet.ahs.state.vt.us/DVTraining/index.html>

**\_\_\_\_(LOCAL NAME)\_\_\_\_ Coordinated Entry Partnership**

**Confidentiality Principles & Policy**

**Staff Acknowledgement Form**

I have read and reviewed the Coordinated Entry Partnership Agreement and the Confidentiality Principles and Policy for Coordinated Entry.

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Signature Date

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Printed Name Organization/Agency

1. <https://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/for-professionals/index.html?language=es> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.samhsa.gov/about-us/who-we-are/laws/confidentiality-regulations-faqs> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)