

Community Relations

Confidential Communications

The Board recognizes that family engagement is very important to the district as it strives to provide a quality education for all. It is also understood that school staff must exercise a delicate balance regarding the treatment of information that was revealed in confidence. Although family engagement is paramount, a staff member may, in their professional judgment, treat information received from a student as confidential while at other times decide to disclose what was learned to the student's parent(s)/guardian(s), school administration, law enforcement officers (including required disclosures to child protective services), the county health department, or other staff members. The staff member should advise the student regarding the limitations and restrictions regarding confidentiality and must maintain appropriate professional boundaries with students at all times. The student is encouraged to reveal confidences to their parent(s)/guardian(s).

The following guidelines are established to assist staff members in making appropriate decisions regarding confidential information and/or communications:

- A. Information contained in the student's cumulative record folder is confidential and is only accessible through the custodian of student records. Information secured through the authorization of the record's custodian will remain confidential and will be used only for the purpose for which access was granted.
- B. While certain professionals may have a unique confidential relationship (e.g. attorney-client privileged communications and licensed psychologists), school staff members including counselors do not possess a confidentiality privilege.
- C. A staff member is expected to reveal information given by a student when there is a reasonable likelihood that suicide ideation or a crime has or will be committed, (e.g., child abuse, sale of drugs).
- D. A staff member will exercise professional judgment regarding the sharing of student disclosed information when there is reasonable likelihood that the student's welfare may be endangered. Staff who are mandatory reporters may be required by law to disclose this information to appropriate authorities pursuant to RCW 26.44.030.
- E. If district officials determine there is a specific threat to the health or safety of a student or any other individual, it may disclose otherwise confidential student information to appropriate parties, as allowed by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

A staff member is encouraged to assist the student and/or family by offering suggestions regarding the availability of community services to assist a student and/or family in dealing with personal matters, (e.g. substance abuse, mental illness, sexually-transmitted diseases, pregnancy), but should avoid engaging students and/or families regarding personal matters unless this duty is specifically included in the staff member's job description. The staff member should encourage the student to discuss such matters with their parent(s)/guardian(s). Staff members are encouraged to discuss problems of this nature with the school principal prior to making contact with others.

Cross References:	Policy 2121	Substance Abuse Program
	Policy 2140	Guidance and Counseling
	Policy 3231	Student Records
	Policy 4040	Public Access to District Records
	Policy 5260	Personnel Records

Legal References:	RCW 26.44.030(12)	Reports – Duty and authority to make – Duty of receiving agency – Duty to notify – Case planning and consultation – Penalty for unauthorized exchange of information – Filing dependency petitions – Investigations – Interviews of children – Records – Risk assessment process.
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Classification: Encouraged

Adoption Date: March 27, 2024