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| 1.a | CONFIDENTIALITY, PRIVACY & DIGNITY PROCEDURE |
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| Applies to: All staff, Committee members, Volunteers, Students |
| Specific responsibility: |

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| Version: 1 |
| Date approved: 5.8.14 |
| Next review date: Aug 21 |

PROCEDURES TO MAINTAIN PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

1. HECIS collects only information which is relevant to determining and meeting the needs of the child and the family. Statistical information required by funding bodies will retain anonymity of user.
2. Child details are required for applications for funding to Dept. of Education & Communities, Dept. Education & Training and National Disability Insurance Scheme. This information will also be held by them in strict confidence, under departmental guidelines for privacy and confidentiality.
3. All information on a child/family is regarded as confidential.
4. Information about a child will be exchanged with other agencies only with consent of the child's parent/carer given in writing using the Release of Information Approvals (included in the HECIS referral forms).
5. Parents have the right to access their child's file at any time and are informed of this right in the Summary Information Handbook.
6. Other agencies are informed that information released to HECIS will be shared with parents.
7. Parents receive copies of all reports and programs written by HECIS staff about their child.
8. All files are stored in filing cabinets in a locked room. Files are retained at HECIS for seven years after a child leaves HECIS. Files are then destroyed.
9. All care is taken to carry files securely in transit.
10. When presenting case studies or discussing children with other professionals, no identifying information is to be exchanged without family consent.
11. Discussion between HECIS staff and parents take place in a private situation as far as possible.
12. All visitors to HECIS (e.g. students, volunteers, committee members, professionals) will not have access to confidential client information unless relevant and only with parent's permission. They will also be required to sign a 'Code of Ethics and Conduct Agreement' form to ensure their commitment to preserving client confidentiality as per the HECIS policies and procedures.

Information may be released without prior parent consent, in the following situations:

- HECIS staff have reasonable grounds to suspect physical, sexual or emotional abuse of a child. *HECIS staff (as mandatory reporters) are legally obliged to notify the Department of Community Services if they suspect a child has been sexually abused. If HECIS staff suspect physical or emotional abuse of a child, they may find it necessary to notify the Department of Community Services, in the interest of protecting the child.*
- A court or other agency authorised by statute has issued a subpoena for information on a child.

Procedures for Referral to other Agencies

- Any proposed referral is first discussed with the child’s family.
- Parents are presented with options of various services which may help them to meet their child’s needs e.g. speech therapy at Community Health Centre, or with a private therapist.
- If requested, the HECIS teacher will make the referral by telephone and/or post on behalf of the family.
- Agencies accepting referrals receive the same report as that received by families. (Information about a child is exchanged only with the consent of the child’s family, given in writing, using the Release of Information Consent Form contained in the HECIS Referral).
- With parent permission, the HECIS teacher will maintain ongoing contact with appropriate agencies.

Principles for supporting the child’s and family’s dignity

- All HECIS staff will respect child a family cultural and religious beliefs.
- Efforts will be made to respect and maintain the home language in children from non-English speaking backgrounds.
- Children will not be labelled and categorised by their disability type.
- As far as possible, the child’s difficulties will not be discussed in front of the child to avoid possible negative effects of the child’s self-esteem.
- Staff will interact with children in appositive way and treat them with respect at all times.

DOCUMENTATION

| Documents related to this procedure | |
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| Related policies | Confidential Information |
| Forms, record keeping or other organisational documents | Code of Ethics and Conduct Agreement HECIS Referral forms Summary Information Handbook NSW Mandatory Reporters Guide May 2013 |

| Reviewing and approving this procedure | | |
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| Frequency | Person responsible | Approval |
| Annually | HECIS Co-Ordinator | Management Committee |

| Policy review and version tracking | | | |
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| Review | Date Approved | Approved by | Next Review Due |
| 1 | 26.8.15 | HECIS CoOrdinator | Aug 2016 |
| 2 | 8.8.16 | HECIS CoOrdinator | Aug 2017 |
| 3 | 16.8.17 | HECIS CoOrdinator | Aug 2018 |
| 4 | 11.9.18 | HECIS CoOrdinator | Aug 2019 |
| 5 | 17.9.19 | HECIS CoOrdinator | Aug 2020 |
| 6 | 15.9.20 | HECIS CoOrdinator | Aug 2021 |