

## Information Sharing Procedure

### 1. Purpose

This procedure provides detailed guidance about the information sharing process for the Inala Community House (ICH) Family Intervention Services (FIS). It relates to:

- The coordination of services and sharing of information to meet the protection and care needs of children and promote their wellbeing under Information sharing under Chapter 5 of the *Child Protection Act 1999 (Qld)*
- The coordination of services and sharing of information to support parents and families to address the parental and family issues that may have led to child protection worries; and
- Information sharing with service users and/or their legal representatives.

Refer to the ICH Privacy Policy for guidance about the protection and sharing of other personal information.

### 2. Scope

This procedure applies to all employees, contractors, students and volunteers within ICH FIS. For the purpose of this procedure, these persons shall be referred to as workers.

### 3. Definitions

**Child** is an individual under 18 years (*Child Protection Act 1999*).

**The Department** refers to the Queensland Government Department responsible for Family Services programs and/or Child Protection or Child Safety.

**Service User** is any parents or family, or carer named in the referral for whom services will be provided, including children.

**The Act** refers to the *Child Protection Act 1999 (Qld)*

### 4. Procedure

#### 4.1. Information sharing (Chapter 5 of the Act)

ICH FIS is a prescribed entity under the Act and contributes to the coordination and sharing of information to meet the protection and care needs of children and promote their wellbeing. ICH FIS adheres to the legislative framework and principles governing this area, including the Department's Information Sharing Guidelines.

#### *Sharing information with Child Safety*

ICH FIS is funded by the Department to support service users of Child Safety Service Centres where ongoing statutory intervention with a family is required. ICH FIS will provide regular progress reports on the family's participation with the service.

ICH FIS workers will also inform the Department of any information which could reasonably be considered to potentially have an impact on the child. This includes information pertaining

to the parents' health, relationship / living situation, drug usage etc. This is not deemed a breach of confidentiality under the *Child Protection Act 1999*.

However, ICH FIS recognises that this information is generally considered to be private in nature, so discretion will be used by the ICH FIS worker with respect to the nature and timing of sharing the information. This means that where possible, the service user will be encouraged to share their own information with the Department in the first instance. Additionally, ICH FIS workers will use their professional judgement to determine what information is of relevance to be shared, recognising that service users may have shared personal and private information while they have been in a vulnerable state. For example, it may not be relevant or necessary for an ICH FIS worker to provide information to the Department with the full details of past trauma if this was shared by a service user, but it may be sufficient to provide overarching themes or a summarized information instead of the information in its entirety.

### *Sharing service user information with consent*

ICH FIS seeks consent to share service user information wherever possible. The process of seeking consent commences during the service user active assessment process (refer to ICH FIS Assessment Procedure). As part of this process, the ICH FIS worker explains the service user's rights and responsibilities, including obtaining consent to share information with other service providers. Service users have the option of limiting or not permitting information sharing with particular services. As a case progresses, it may be beneficial for information to be shared with additional third-party service providers. The FIS Case Worker will explain to the service user the rationale behind wanting to share information with additional services and consent will be sought and must be noted in a case note (refer to ICH FIS Intervention and Monitoring Procedure).

ICH FIS workers shall advise the service user about their intention to contact a service provider prior to doing so. This is to ensure transparency and promote service user empowerment and engagement with the service. All communications with a service provider in relation to a service user must be recorded in case notes and copies of referral forms to external services must be stored on the service user's file.

Where other service providers are sharing information with ICH FIS, the ICH FIS worker should check that the service user has provided their consent to the other service provider, wherever possible.

### *Sharing service user information without consent*

At times, it may not be safe, possible or practical to receive service user consent to share their information as it may jeopardise the safety or wellbeing of a person. ICH FIS can share relevant information without consent to identify, access and respond to child protection concerns. Information for this purpose can be shared with entities defined in the Act including the Department, prescribed entities including specialist service providers and other service providers. Refer to the Department's Information Sharing Guidelines for more detail.

ICH FIS workers will most likely receive direct requests to share information from other service providers or parties and must use their professional judgement to proceed based on the individual circumstances of the child and family. The ICH FIS worker should discuss any concerns with the ICH FIS Manager, who will provide direction about the appropriate response.

Information sharing without service user consent must be comprehensively documented in

case notes and any other supporting documentation stored on the service user's file.

Refer to the ICH FIS Incident Reporting and Management Policy, and ICH FIS Incident Reporting Procedure for reporting to the Department, harm or risk of harm to a child.

## 4.2. Information sharing with service users and/or their legal representatives.

### *Service user requests for information*

ICH FIS workers promote transparency with service users and openly share most information with service users to inform their direction for goal setting and action planning, which is documented in the Family Action Plan (FAP). The FAP and reviews are shared with service users to encourage their engagement with the service. Refer to the ICH FIS Case Planning Procedure for further information.

At times, a service user may request further information that the ICH FIS service maintains. This request should be case noted in the service user's file.

If requested, the ICH FIS worker can provide service users with electronic or hard copies of their Progress Reports and Exit Report (refer to ICH FIS Intervention and Monitoring Procedure and ICH FIS Case Closure Procedure). If required, the ICH FIS worker can also discuss the information included in these reports to help the service user understand and accept the information, which would be determined on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the ICH FIS Manager.

Service user requests for their case notes are to be refused and should be subpoenaed.

### *Service user's legal representative's requests for information*

ICH FIS does not provide the details of any case and/or assessment details directly to a service user's legal representative.

The scope of communication with a service user's legal representative is limited to:

- Procedure matters e.g., explaining work processes such as developing a FAP
- Updates to service user or ICH FIS worker contact details
- Brief factual information about arrangements e.g., confirmation of service user transport to an appointment.

Refer to Guidelines for ICH FIS Engaging with Clients Legal Representative for further detail.

## 5. Review

This procedure shall be reviewed every three years.

## 6. Related Documents

### **Policies**

ICH Privacy Policy

## ICH FIS Case Management Policy

### **Procedures**

ICH FIS Assessment Procedure  
ICH FIS Case Planning Procedure  
ICH FIS Intervention and Monitoring Procedure  
ICH FIS Case Closure Procedure

### **Other documents**

ICH FIS Engaging with Clients Legal Representative

### **Forms**

ICH FIS Consent Form  
ICH FIS Family Action Plan  
ICH FIS Progress Report  
ICH FIS Exit Report

### **References**

*Child Protection Act 1999 (Qld)*  
Qld Human Services Quality Framework  
Departmental Investment Specifications  
Departments Information Sharing Guidelines