PRIVACY, SECURITY, AND CONFIDENTIALITY
(Adapted from Vancouver Coastal Health, 2012)

Your participation in clinical observations and practicum placements, academic coursework, and research activities will provide you with access to confidential client information. You are responsible for keeping all confidential information received from a client/patient, family, clinical educator, professor, and/or researcher, private and secure.

What does privacy, security, and confidentiality mean?
Privacy is the right of a person to decide what information about them may be collected, used, and shared with others. Security is what we put in place to protect the availability, integrity, and confidentiality of personal information, for example, usernames and passwords, policies, and system audits. Confidentiality refers to our duty to keep personal information private. Information is considered confidential if it is not intended for the public.

What is personal information?
Personal information is any recorded information that identifies a person, including:
- Name, address, or telephone number
- Race, national or ethnic origin, colour, or religious or political beliefs or associations
- Age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, or family status
- Fingerprints, blood type or inheritable characteristics
- An identifying number, symbol or other assigned to a person
- Information about the person's healthcare history, including a physical or mental disability
- An individual's views or opinions
- A third party's opinion about that information

What can I do to protect personal information?
By following the tips below, you can help to better protect personal information:
- Do not share your username and password to any application, including e-mail
- Log off when you are finished using a workstation
- Do not discuss confidential information in public areas
- Do not "surf" for information you do not need to know
- Never leave confidential information unattended
- Do not discuss confidential information outside your job
- Assume that anything you write can be released - therefore, keep your documentation factual and objective
- Always wear your school ID
- If a client requests access to their information, refer them to your Clinical Educator
- Consider the necessity prior to accessing confidential information

Can I look up my health information on the clinical information system?
Patients and clients have a right to access their medical records. However, you cannot look up your own information on the clinical information system. Access to clinical systems is for the primary purpose of providing care and services and is done on a "need to know" basis. If you would like to access your own personal medical record, you must do so through Health Records.

What is "need to know"?
A security principle stating that an individual should have access only to the information they need to perform their job. Therefore, before you access confidential information, ask yourself if you really need to know it.

Confidentiality Acknowledgement
All students are required to read and sign Dalhousie's student acknowledgement form prior to the start of each placement. Any breach of confidentiality may cause the placement to be terminated, along with the risk of legal action by the site and others.

Confidentiality Overview
During your placement, you will have access to confidential information regarding clients, staff, and organizational operations. You are obliged not to disclose any confidential information or records to anyone in any manner except when authorized by the client/caregiver. Information is considered confidential if it is not intended for the public. For example, information about an organization that can be found on their website is NOT considered to be confidential. In contrast, information that exposes internal

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operations (e.g., internal memos or information regarding suppliers or contracts) is not meant for public knowledge and consequently must be treated as CONFIDENTIAL. **All information regarding clients, clients' families, and staff is considered confidential and must be treated as such.**

Confidentiality Basics

As part of your placement, you may have access to confidential client information such as medical records and computer records. However, you can only access this information if it falls directly within the scope of your client care duties (e.g., you cannot look up information for yourself, friends, relatives, neighbours, etc.). You are not permitted to copy, alter, interfere with, destroy, or take information or records. You are not permitted to release information to clients/families, health care agencies, the media, or others. You must re-direct these requests to your Clinical Educator. You are responsible for keeping client information secure and private. When carrying confidential information (e.g., mail, medical records), ensure that client details are not in view and that items are never left unsecured in public areas. The confidentiality of your co-workers is also your responsibility, and you must maintain their privacy at all times (it is never acceptable to share co-workers' personal telephone numbers or discuss their personal/health issues with anyone). As students, you will often want to discuss client issues with your fellow students to share in each other's learning. *You are required to always maintain client confidentiality, even after your clinical placement has ended. It is your responsibility to ensure that:*

- *Discussion of client issues happens only in appropriate settings and for the purpose of furthering clinical learning (e.g., classroom, case conference, etc.)*
- No confidential client information is disclosed or shared, either within or outside of the school or practicum placement, to anyone in any manner, except to other people who are authorized in writing to receive such information
- If a client, family member/caregiver, or other professional requests access to client information, you will refer them to your Clinical Educator or Professor
- *No identifiable client information (e.g., names and other personal details) is shared*
- *You eliminate any identifying client information from presentations, written assignments, emails, client reports, etc.*
- You keep any computer access codes (e.g., passwords and usernames) confidential and secure
- *If you access information from a client record, even if that client is under your care, you must first obtain the client's consent before using this information in a learning context*

Confidentiality Breaches

Students can breach patient confidentiality without intending to. Below are examples of such breaches:
- *Removing client information from the academic or clinical setting (e.g., taking client information home for an assignment)*
- *Accessing information not related to your duties or not within your scope of client care duties (e.g., looking up the client record of someone not on your clinical caseload, looking up your own client record or the record of someone you know)*
- Copying, altering, interfering with, destroying, or taking client information or records
- *Discussing client information in an inappropriate area where your conversation can be overheard (e.g., hallway, elevator, cafeteria)*
- *Carrying/delivering information in a way that exposes client details* (e.g., visible client names or information while carrying charts within a practicum setting) *or leaving information in inappropriate areas*
- *Giving out client information that is considered confidential*
- *E-mailing client information via the Internet*
- *Discussing client cases with fellow students in a way that reveals clients' identifying information*
- Initiating conversation with clients in a public setting (e.g., approaching a client in the grocery store or another public area)
- Accessing electronic records from restricted or unauthorized computers.

Remember: Any breach of confidentiality may result in immediate dismissal from the placement, legal action by the placement site and others, and possible expulsion from Dalhousie University's School of Communication Sciences and Disorders

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