

What is Confidentiality?

Confidentiality means that the therapist has a responsibility to the client to make sure that what is discussed in therapy is not shared with anyone else.

There are certain circumstances where the therapist must break confidentiality. These circumstances include:

- When the client has given the therapist reason to believe that they are going to harm themselves, or others.
- When there is reason to believe that a child is being harmed or neglected.
- When there is reason to believe that adults who can't protect themselves, such as elderly or disabled individuals, are being harmed.
- If the client's records have been requested by the courts.
 - The records should only be provided by the therapist after they have talked with a lawyer to understand what they must provide.
- If others, such as employers or insurance providers – known as a third party – request client information, it may have to be provided.
 - The therapist should discuss this with their client and let them know what is being asked and why.
 - If the third party takes legal action to obtain information about the client the therapist should talk to their lawyer about what information they must submit, if any.
- In the case of family or couples counselling, secrets will not be kept by the therapist.
 - This means that what one person says to a therapist might be discussed with the other people that are considered a client.
- When the therapist shares information about the client with their supervisor.
 - This information is shared to ensure that the therapist is providing the best possible care for their client.
- Confidentiality must be kept by the therapist, except in the case of any of the above circumstances.
- It is illegal and/or unethical for the therapist to break confidentiality.

References

British Columbia Association of Clinical Counsellors (2014, May). *How private is private? A detailed consideration of a clinical counsellor's legal duty of confidentiality and the exceptions created by the duties to report or warn*. Retrieved from <https://bc-counsellors.org/app/uploads/2015/10/140501-How-Private-Is-Private-REVISED.pdf>