



Confidentiality and Privilege

An overview of current state and federal laws and statutes for domestic violence victim advocates

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Role of Confidentiality in the Domestic Violence Movement

- Historically, confidentiality and secrecy were cornerstone principles of the domestic violence movement.
- Keeping survivors' information confidential helps decrease danger in their lives and maintains their autonomy.
- Integrating a deeply rooted understanding of confidentiality into your day-to-day work is critical to victims, other advocates, your agency, and the broader anti-violence movement.

Importance of Confidentiality in Advocacy

Definition of Advocacy:

“means that the client is involved with an advocate . . .with a primary focus of safety planning, empowerment, and education of the client through reinforcement of the client's autonomy and self-determination.” WAC 388-61A-0220

Honoring confidential disclosures is critical to reinforcing survivors' autonomy and self-determination.



Legal Protections

- Federal and state laws and regulations protect domestic violence victim advocates and domestic violence victim service agencies from requests by other agencies and individuals seeking information about the victims they serve.
- DV advocates are on firm legal ground in asserting and defending a victim's right to confidentiality.

A Note About Terminology

- State law: Revised Code of Washington (RCW)
 - Must be voted on by state legislature
 - Subject to change and compromise to get passed into law
- State statute: Washington Administrative Code (WAC)
 - Regulations for state agencies and their contractors to follow
 - Not passed by legislature, but have the force of law