



## Volunteer Privacy

Organisations that engage with volunteers should be aware of their legal responsibilities when dealing with volunteers' personal information.

### Confidential Information

A good way to think about privacy is to consider your own personal information. We all choose what we share and with whom. What we tell a close friend is different from what we might share with a checkout operator who asks how our day has been.

To ensure personal information is handled properly, consider each of these areas:

- **Be clear about your purpose.** Know who you are, what information you need, and why you need it.
- **Collect information directly from the person concerned.**
- **Explain what you're doing and why.** Even if it's written on a form, take a moment to explain it verbally and check that the person understands.
- **Handle information fairly.** Use it only for the intended purpose.
- **Maintain privacy when sharing sensitive information.** Have these conversations in private, away from others.
- **Think before sharing information.** Ask yourself, "Would this person want me to share this? How would they feel if they were listening right now?"
- **Respect private conversations.** Be mindful of people's right to speak in confidence, especially in public or shared spaces.

When collecting information always tell the person why you're doing so and whether answering is optional or compulsory. For example, you may want to know a client's age for statistical purposes, but they are not obliged to provide it. Only those who need the information for their role should

have access to it. If information is stored on a computer, ensure it is protected and accessible only to authorised personnel.

People will trust your organisation if they can see that you take privacy seriously.

### Keeping and Disclosing Information

Keep personal information only as long as necessary. Ensure your organisation has clear policies on when and how information can be disclosed (e.g., in cases of child abuse).

### Challenges

There can be challenges in balancing individual privacy with community support. For example, should you inform a person's family about their situation? In such cases, consider the purpose and be transparent.

In a parish setting, it may be common to offer public prayers for someone who is unwell. If this is the practice, ensure it is clearly communicated so people are aware in advance.

Everyone has different views on what is private. If someone shares sensitive information with you and you believe someone else should know, ask for their permission. A simple "Have you told your doctor about this?" or "Do you mind if I share this with my supervisor?" can clarify how confidential the information is.

If you have a question about privacy contact the Office of the Privacy Commissioner, phone 0800 803 909 or visit their website [www.privacy.org.nz](http://www.privacy.org.nz).