

PRIVACY

Policy: this privacy policy relates to the use and disclosure of information collected about Fin WA clients. At Fin we understand your personal information is important and should be protected. In line with national privacy principles, this policy outlines what kind of information we may gather about you when you visit our website and use our services; how we may use that information; whether we disclose it to anyone; and the choices you have regarding our use of, and your ability to correct this information. This policy applies only to fin and not to other organisations or departments to which Fin refers clients or is linked.

Fin is committed to and adheres to the National Privacy Principles and guidelines as endorsed by the Office of the Federal Privacy Commissioner. These principles are designed to protect all personal information collected from our clients.

How we collect your information and what sort of information we collect

As part of the services Fin delivers, we collect and retain information about you that assists us in the provision of services. We collect information on you each time you meet with a Fin member in person or speak with them over the telephone. This can be in any of the following situations:

- Where making a referral for service in which the information we ask you about your situation will be passed on to the agency we anticipate will be able to help you. We will only pass information to agencies that have a privacy policy.
- Where part of a research project in which it is required to have non identifying statistical information and any link to your identity will not be passed on or available to anyone else
- Where a Fin member is helping you directly and will pass on only that information which is needed for the purpose of our assistance (eg your current situation may be passed to DCP where it is helpful to achieve your aims).

How we use your information

At Fin we are committed to keeping and treating all information as confidential. We ensure records are kept in a secure manner and available only to those who are properly authorised to access them. We keep file and computer records on each client for various reasons. Some of these are:

- so staff can keep track of what has happened
- to enable another worker to take over if needed
- to enable statistical data to be collected
- for those times when we must account for what we've done

The only people who have access to your records include the Fin WA staff with whom you have direct contact and their supervisor who ensures quality practice and

management. All staff recognise the imperative nature of confidentiality and the level of care required in this area.

Disclosing your personal information

There may be times when Fin is legally bound to disclose personal information to appropriate authorities. In these circumstances, every effort will be made to advise you before any information is released. You have a right to know when we may choose or be compelled to disclose personal information about you. The situation is not simple and the limits of confidentiality are complex; nonetheless, if you have any concerns after reading this policy, please ask your Fin member to clarify it for you.

In cases where we have been summonsed to give evidence in Court, we shall use what protections there are in law to limit what is attested to. In other instances, Fin may be able to provide a copy of your report or extracts to you for use in the Family Court or other Courts, but this could entail a cost. Please speak with your Fin member for more information.

Whenever it appears that we might need to breach confidentiality, we follow a set procedure to ensure members act with all due care and responsibility. For example, if a member is concerned about a client's actions, it would normally be discussed with their supervisor and manager. Where needed, a special review committee is set up to consider all aspects of the situation before any formal action is taken. Wherever appropriate, you will be advised of our concerns and, in most cases, be told of our decision in advance.

We do not disclose personal information that you may give us, such as your name, address, email address or telephone number, to any organisation or person outside Fin unless you have authorised us to do so.

Marketing our services to you

During the course of marketing our services to you, we may collect your name, telephone number and postal address. Under no circumstances will Fin sell or receive payment for licensing or disclosing your personal information. Many clients prefer to always contact us and, at times, initially only provide us with their mobile telephone number. They choose to do this until they believe a trustful relationship has been developed between them and their Fin member.

Quality of your information

Fin is committed to providing professional quality services to clients. This includes the documentation of quality information. As part of this commitment to you, we shall ensure all Fin members protect your information and store it in a safe and proper place.

Security of your personal information

At Fin we go to considerable lengths to ensure your records are secure. These may be notes made by a member; a letter or document you sent us; or some electronic records such as audio/video tapes and documents on computer discs. We are developing systems to protect your information and only authorised persons will have access to your records. All files are stored in locked cabinets.

Openness

Everything we learn about you will be kept confidential, but only within the limits of professional practice and legal requirements. At the commencement of your first meeting with a Fin member, the member shall explain our privacy commitments and exclusions to you. It is important to us that you are aware of your right to privacy. You may be requested to sign a form that states you have read and understood our privacy policy. You may take it away with you and ask a friend to go through it before you commit to anything.

At times we may decide or be compelled to release your personal information. Some of these instances are:

- when it is believed there is serious risk of self-harm or danger to another person;
- when there has been a disclosure of child abuse or neglect indicating ongoing serious risk;
- when you specifically authorise us. For example, an insurance company may require evidence stating that you attended counselling. We can provide this information once you have signed a release of information form. Please note, that if you saw us as one of a family group or a couple, we would need permission from each of the family members involved; and
- when we are compelled by law.

This is a complex area and there may be times when we may be required to answer questions in a court or respond to a summons. If you would like more information on this or how it might affect you, please ask your Fin worker.

Website Security

While every effort is taken to ensure our website remains secure, please be aware that there are some interactive features on the Fin website to which you may contribute. One of these could be a chat forum. When interacting with Fin online, we suggest you use your discretion and exercise caution when providing your personal information. Note that whenever you post personal information in publicly accessible places, such as chat rooms or message boards, this information becomes available to anyone with access to the Internet. This information can be collected and used by others. In short, if you post personal information online that is accessible to the public, you may receive unsolicited messages from other parties in return. Therefore, we recommend you refrain from posting any information that you do not want seen in these public areas. For example, when participating in a Fin forum or chat area, your name will appear on the message board. Fin recommends applicants registering online do not use their real

names, but a pen name or pseudonym. You must not intentionally use the name of another living person. Ultimately, you are solely responsible for maintaining the secrecy of your passwords and/or any personal information. Be responsible whenever you are online.

Accessing and correcting your information

Fin clients may request access to any personal information Fin holds about them. This requirement is in line with the National Privacy Principles. You have the right to check the records we hold on you. If you wish to check your records, please ask Fin for an application form.

We will need to identify you and to check whether the information is available separately or in a combined way with another party (eg records for more than one member of a family / government department representative). We need to ensure that any other party has given consent and they have been properly identified before we release information to you. Where they refuse we may need to carefully extract just those parts of the record that refer solely to you. Therefore, you can only see what other people have said about you on your file if they have been properly identified and given their consent in writing. Otherwise, you will only be able to see what you have said and the Fin member's notes.

At Fin we shall try to meet your request within a reasonable period of time and cost. We may need up to 14 days to prepare the material and it could cost up to \$55 an hour for extracting and providing information.

In general, detailed client records are kept for one year and then destroyed. Records limited to name, contact details and service utilised including dates of contact may be kept longer. Some important records and documents may be held indefinitely.

Please understand that you cannot have your file, but you can have access to it.

What to do if you think we've made an error

If you believe information we have is incorrect we shall amend it if we consider it appropriate or we may simply note your concern and provide you with a reason why we consider that the record should not be altered. We will also note on the record your objection and what you consider is the correct record.

Taking your concerns further?

If you feel aggrieved by anything Fin has done in relation to your privacy please put your concerns in writing and email your letter to info@finwa.org.au

If you are still dissatisfied after you receive our reply you may appeal by writing to:
The Director of Complaints

Office of the Federal Privacy Commissioner

GPO Box 5218

Sydney NSW 1042

Hotline: 1300 363 992

Tel: 02-9284 9800

Fax: 02-9284 9666

Email: privacy@privacy.gov.au This email address is being protected from spam bots, you need Javascript enabled to view it

If you would like more information on the Privacy Act in Australia, the following websites are useful:

- The Australian Privacy Commission's Web Site www.privacy.gov.au
- Australasian Legal Information Institute www.austlii.edu.au
- Australian Law Online www.australianlawonline.gov.au