

Policy	CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY
Purpose	This Confidentiality Policy ensures that all interactions and communications with individuals contacting the Lifeline are kept confidential, promoting a safe and trusting environment for callers. This policy outlines the conditions under which confidentiality may be breached, in accordance with specific legal and ethical guidelines.
Definitions	<p>Confidentiality: The obligation to protect personal information shared by callers, ensuring that it is not disclosed to unauthorized individuals.</p> <p>Duty to Warn: The legal requirement to disclose information if a caller poses a serious threat to themselves or others.</p> <p>Mandatory Reporting: The legal requirement to report certain information, such as abuse or neglect, to appropriate authorities.</p> <p>Imminent Risk: An individual is determined to be at imminent risk of suicide (“imminent risk”) if the Lifeline staff responding to the contact believe, based on information gathered, that there is a very short time frame between the person’s current safety/risk status and actions that could lead to their suicide. For a caller to be considered imminent risk there must be the following; plan, means, and short time frame.</p> <p>Abusive Contact: Callers who are utilizing Lifeline’s services in a way it is not intended, usually for the purpose of causing emotional distress or humiliation to Call Takers, interfering with service delivery for the Lifeline as a whole, or for personal gratification beyond emotional support. Abusive contacts include the following type of calls: harassing, phishing, prank, sexually motivated, swatting, and verbal abuse.</p>
Policy Statement	Family Services of the Merrimack Valley is committed to maintaining the confidentiality of all callers to the Lifeline. All phone calls and content will remain confidential, except in the following circumstances: when required by the Duty to Warn Policy, Mandatory Reporting of Abuse to Minors or Vulnerable Adults Policy, Imminent Risk Policy, and/or Abusive Contact policy.

<p>Procedures</p>	<p>Caller Privacy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Lifeline staff and volunteers must respect the privacy of callers and ensure that any information shared during the call is kept confidential. • Caller information should only be accessed by authorized personnel on a need-to-know basis. <p>Exceptions to Confidentiality:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Duty to Warn: If a caller poses a serious threat to themselves or others, Lifeline staff are required to disclose this information to appropriate authorities as per the Duty to Warn policy. • Mandatory Reporting: If a caller discloses information about abuse, neglect, or other situations requiring mandatory reporting, staff must report this information to the relevant authorities as outlined in the Mandatory Reporting policy. • Imminent Risk: If a caller is at imminent risk of sustaining life-threatening injury, Lifeline staff must take appropriate actions, including disclosing information to emergency services, in accordance with the Imminent Risk policy. • Abusive Contact: If a caller engages in abusive or harassing behavior, staff may need to take steps to protect themselves and the Lifeline service, including breaching confidentiality, if necessary, as per the Abusive Contact policy. <p>Documentation and Record-Keeping:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All instances of confidentiality breaches must be documented, including the reason for the breach and the steps taken. • Documentation should be stored securely and only accessible to authorized personnel. <p>Review and Compliance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Confidentiality Policy will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains current and effective. • Compliance with the policy will be monitored regularly, and any breaches will be addressed promptly with appropriate action.
<p>Training</p>	<p>Lifeline staff will be trained on the Confidentiality Policy at new employee orientation, and with ongoing training as needed.</p>
<p>Related Policies, Laws & Regulations</p>	<p>Duty to Warn Policy Mandatory Reporting of Abuse to Minors or Vulnerable Adults Policy</p>

	Imminent Risk Policy Abusive Contact Policy
Forms & Attachments	Lifeline Training Manual 2024