

Privacy Principles and Practices.

Protecting Your Privacy

Mallee Track Health and Community Service (MTHCS) is committed to protecting your privacy. We are required by law to protect all your personal and confidential information such as information relating to your health and other personal details. We comply with all Victorian legislation relating to confidentiality and privacy, including, where relevant, the Health Services Act 1988 (Vic), the Health Records Act 2001 (Vic) and the Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014, and in accordance with guidelines issued by the Health Complaints Commissioner.

This statement sets out policies for the management of health information at MTHCS.

Staff at MTHCS cannot use or disclose information of a personal nature, except to the extent that this is required, authorised or permitted under law or where you consent to release. All staff at MTHCS are trained and understand their obligations under the laws relating to maintaining your privacy. Policies at MTHCS are in place to ensure that only staff involved in your treatment access your health record.

Staff at MTHCS will only collect health information that is necessary for them to perform their duties and functions. They will always try to do so in a fair, lawful and non-intrusive way. Wherever possible, the collection of information will be made directly from you rather than from third parties. Staff at MTHCS will do their best to tell you if information has been collected about you from a third party.

When you become a patient of MTHCS, a medical record is made. It contains your name, address, contact details, health information and the treatment you were given.

When information is collected from you, you have the right to be informed of the following:

- Why it is being collected;
- What law, if any, requires it to be collected;
- Who generally will have access to that information;
- Staff will also explain the consequences for you if the information is not provided (depending on your medical condition, it is our normal practice to share certain information with third parties. For example, your treating General Practitioner will receive a discharge summary from us).
- If you require a District Nurse or Allied Health Practitioner, they will be provided with information about your condition. If you require other services on discharge, such as Home and Community Care, the appropriate persons will be contacted and we will provide them with only the relevant information required.

Generally, information is collected for the purpose of providing care and treatment to you and for purposes directly related to providing such care and treatment.

Your information may be disclosed to other health care providers for the purpose of providing further treatment to you.

We may also use your information for purposes as are permitted under the privacy laws. Aside from where the law specifically allows your health information to be used and disclosed, MTHCS staff are not to use or disclose such information for purposes which are unrelated to the purposes for which they were collected without your prior consent.

MTHCS staff will undertake everything possible to make sure that the information held about you is accurate, complete and up to date. Every time you attend MTHCS new information is added to your record.

In certain situations your medical record may be reviewed by Clinical Auditors. This is done to monitor and reduce adverse events and to improve the quality of care.

You may ask for access to information being held about you. However, there are some exemptions to this. For example, if the access to health information about you would unreasonably disclose information relating to others or where the information would otherwise be exempt from disclosure by law.

It is also important to note that from time to time, transfer of health information about you to organisations outside Victoria for the purpose of provision of care or treatment to you may also be required. For example, you might be transferred to a hospital in Adelaide for further treatment and your medical record would be useful for the treating Doctor to quickly identify which treatments are likely to be safe and effective for you. This may only be done where you consent and where we believe that the recipient organisation is subject to binding privacy obligations that are substantially similar to the ones under which we operate, or where it is in your interests for us to do so (and it is impracticable to obtain your consent).

You have the right to tell us that you do not wish to have any information released about your health status. We will respect your wishes to the extent permitted by law.

Be reassured at MTHCS any suspected infringements of privacy will be thoroughly investigated. Disciplinary action is taken in cases where infringements of privacy are proven.

If you have been transported to hospital via ambulance, ambulance personnel from Ambulance Victoria, will have collected basic personal details (e.g. name, address, telephone number, date of birth and insurance or benefit card details if available), incident details and initial medical information required to ensure your safe transportation, effective treatment on arrival at the hospital and billing for ambulance services if required. This information is provided to the hospital upon arrival to ensure continuity of care. Your information is securely managed by both the hospital and ambulance services.

A member of the health care team may contact you after you have left MTHCS to find out how you are getting on. This is part of providing quality health care.

Your basic personal details may be passed onto the Service Admissions Officer (SAO) who's role it is to identify customer needs and the range of services available to meet those needs. The SAO is specifically trained to help customers and will collect only the information required by the agency to provide you with the service. With your consent, the SAO will share this information with other agencies if referral is required.

Accessing your information

If you:

- **Want to have access to your health information we hold about you;**
- **Believe information we hold about you is inaccurate and would like to request that it be amended;**
- **Want to know more about the type of information we hold, for what purposes and how we deal with that information, or;**
- **Have concerns that your privacy rights may have been infringed,**

please firstly discuss this matter with the staff member assisting you or:

**Contact: Freedom of Information Officer
Mrs Pamela Vallance
PO Box 130
Ouyen VIC 3490**

**Phone: 03 5092-1111
Email: pvallance@mthcs.vic.gov.au**

Requests for access to your medical record can be made in writing to:

**The Freedom of Information Officer
Mallee Track Health and Community Service.**

A fee of \$29.60 must accompany such requests, payable to Mallee Track Health and Community Service.

References:

Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014
Health Services Act 1988 as amended 2014, and
The Health Records Act 2001 as amended 2014,
Freedom of Information Act as amended 2017 (Vic).