

# CLIENT HANDBOOK



## MISSION STATEMENT

**“Providing services through collaboration, leadership and innovation that create positive change and contribute to a healthy community.”**

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

All client information is privileged and confidential. Employees shall not transmit any information to another person without prior authorization from the client receiving the direct service (or legal guardian) unless permitted by law. Release of confidential information, when authorized through a “Consent to Release Information,” shall be in the best interest of service delivery to the client and adhere to the agency’s release of information policy.

## **CLIENT COMPLAINTS**

### **Individual/Family Member Complaints**

Individuals and/or their families are encouraged to bring any concern they have with the services they have received directly to the attention of program staff and to attempt to resolve issues informally through open and respectful dialogue. Any concerns brought to the attention of staff must be documented in daily notes or sessional recordings along with the staff response to the concern.

In the event that an individual or family member has not had their concern addressed to their satisfaction through an informal process, the concern will be considered a formal complaint by the agency and the formal complaint process will be followed.

### **Formal Complaint Process**

- The individual and/or their family members will be asked to submit a written complaint to the Society that is signed and dated. Program staff will assist the individual and/or family member with writing and submitting the complaint if requested and as required.
- The written complaint will be forwarded to the Program Manager or Executive Director.
- The Program Manager or Executive Director will investigate the matter and will respond to the complainant within 10 working days. The response to the complaint and explanation of any decisions regarding the complaint will be provided in writing and will be sent by registered mail or provided to the complainant directly. A copy of the complaint and response will be provided to the agency’s Executive Director and any other concerned party at the Executive Director’s discretion and consistent with the agency’s confidentiality policy. All letters of response to a complaint from the Program Manager will include instructions indicating that if the complainant is not satisfied with the response, they can appeal the matter to the Executive Director.
- In the event that an individual or family member chooses to appeal the Program Manager’s decision, the request should be made in writing and program staff or the Program Manager will assist in completing a written request to review the complaint as required. Complainants are asked to make such requests within 10 days of receiving the response from the Program Manager.
- Upon receipt of a request to review the complaint, the Executive Director will investigate the matter and will respond to the complainant within 10 working days. The

process for reviewing the complaint may include consultations with the individual making the complaint, the Program Manager, a review of file information, and gathering information from the individuals involved. The response to the complaint and explanation of any decisions regarding the complaint will be provided in writing and will be sent by registered mail or provided to the complainant directly.

- All letters of response from the Executive Director to a complaint will include instructions indicating that if the complainant is not satisfied with the response, they may ask for the matter to be reviewed by the Board of Directors. A request for a review by the Board should be made within 10 days of receiving the response from the Executive Director. Upon receiving the request, the Board will review the matter at the next scheduled Board meeting. The response from the Board and explanation of any decisions regarding the complaint will be provided in writing and will be sent by registered mail or provided to the complainant directly.
- In the event that the complainant is not satisfied with the response from the Board of Directors, they will be encouraged to take the matter to an appropriate external authority such as the BC Representative for Children and Youth or the Provincial Ombudsman.

Information about the complaint process will be provided to all individuals and their family members at the time of intake to service and upon request.

All complaints are treated as confidential, except where disclosure is necessary to complete an investigation. Where disclosure is necessary, consent will be obtained from the complainant.

The agency expressly forbids any form of retaliation or action that could result in a barrier to service to be taken against an individual or family member making a complaint.

If the complaint is directed at the Program Manager or for another valid reason it should not be investigated by the Program Manager, the matter will be referred directly to the Executive Director for review.

In all cases, a person bringing forward a concern or a formal complaint will be supported through the process. The individual can request a staff person, another professional or a community member to act as an advocate for them in this process. The agency will make every reasonable effort to accommodate such requests.

## ***CODE OF ETHICS***

All Employees and Volunteers of the Society will conduct themselves consistent with the following ethical principles:

**a) Respect for the uniqueness of the individuals we serve, including their values and beliefs as well as their potential for growth and development.**

*Practice Requirements:*

- Ensure that individual differences including values and beliefs are respected.
- Maintain a strength and solution oriented perspective in our approach to service delivery consistent with our service delivery philosophy.
- Assist individuals to develop to their full potential.

**b) Respect for, honouring of, and upholding of the rights of individuals.**

*Practice Requirements:*

- Recognize and respect participant confidentiality.
- Protect and promote legal and human rights of individuals.
- Ensure that client self-determination is respected to the greatest extent possible.
- Engage in actions that prevent the abuse, neglect, or exploitation of individuals.
- Ensure that all individuals have the opportunity to provide informed consent to services to the greatest extent possible.

**c) Promoting the health, safety and well-being of the individuals we serve, their families and support networks, and the communities they live in.**

*Practice Requirements:*

- Promote the physical, mental, social, emotional, and spiritual health of the individuals and families we serve.
- Ensure that safety is a priority in the delivery of all Agency programs consistent with Health and Safety policy.
- Where possible and appropriate, to participate in activities that promote the health and safety of the community consistent with our mission and values.

**d) Caring, support, and striving to enhance the dignity of the individuals we serve.**

*Practice Requirements:*

- Respect the privacy, dignity, and worth of individuals and their property.
- Show compassion and empathy in the services we provide.
- Refrain from any activity that might embarrass, belittle or demoralize individuals or their family members.

**e) Practice that emphasizes partnerships with the individuals we serve, their families and support networks, and the community including other community service providers.**

*Practice Requirements:*

- Where possible, to take a collaborative approach to service delivery that emphasizes shared responsibility.
- Endeavour to include and consult families and support networks of the individuals we serve while respecting their wishes and confidentiality.

- Establishing and maintaining effective working relationships with community partners and referring sources.
- Develop and promote the expectations and choices of individuals.

**f) Respect for diversity, cultural heritage, and spiritual beliefs.**

*Practice Requirements:*

- Showing sensitivity to the impact of cultural heritage and spiritual belief in the delivery of services.
- Accommodating cultural and spiritual practices and beliefs where possible and reasonable within the context of the service we provide.
- Take reasonable action to prevent and eliminate discrimination in all forms including age, race, skin colour, gender, income, sexual orientation, spiritual beliefs and disability.

**g) Commitment to competent and accountable practice that is both ethical and responsible.**

*Practice Requirements:*

- Practice our professions to the best of our ability.
- Practice within the policies and procedures of the agency.
- Identify and avoid all conflicts of interest.
- Promote ethical conduct within the agency and in the community.
- Recognize when personal problems or needs can interfere with professional effectiveness and act to eliminate or minimize the impact through setting firm professional boundaries.
- Demonstrate integrity in all professional relationships.
- Act with diligence, efficiency, and conscientiousness.
- Abstain from activities that might result in the actual or perceived exploitation of clients for advantage or personal gain, including accepting or exchanging gifts, money, and gratuities or engaging in fund raising not related to agency initiatives. Staff may exchange token gifts with clients, but must report all such instances to their immediate Program Manager.
- Maintain accountable reporting practices including reporting all incidents of abuse or neglect and all instances where harm or the potential for harm to children, families, employees or members of the community at large occurs or is present.
- Ensure that any situations involving the witnessing of documents is consistent with agency policy (including Informed Consent) and in the best interest of individuals is served.

**h) Commitment to professional and organizational excellence through an accountable, transparent and results oriented approach to delivering services.**

*Practice Requirements:*

- Strive to provide the most effective service possible by participating in activities designed to improve the services we deliver.

- Continuously pursue improvement in our ability to provide services through seeking out and implementing best practices, taking actions to enhance the knowledge, skills, and self-awareness necessary to be competent, and evaluating our efforts.
- Value client input to the greatest extent possible.
- Ensure that human resource practices are fair, transparent, respect equality and are conducted in the best interests of the individuals served.
- Ensuring the honest representation of the organization in any business, marketing or promotional efforts.
- When engaged in fundraising activities, ensure that all solicitation and communication materials are accurate and correctly reflect their organization's mission and use of solicited funds.
- Donors receive informed, accurate and ethical advice about the value and tax implications of contributions.
- Contributions are used in accordance with donors' intentions and YCS will obtain explicit consent by donors before altering the conditions of financial transactions.
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- Ensuring that all contracts entered into by the agency are consistent with the best interests of the individuals served, adhere to agency policy regarding contracting, and that contractual relationships avoid conflicts of interest.
- Abstain from any act of professional misconduct, including activity or practices that involve intentionally wasting or misusing our resources, committing fraud or engaging in intimidating or abusive behaviour.

Any instances of suspected violations of the Code of Ethics should be reported immediately. Any such instances will be investigated and acted upon consistent with the "Reporting & Investigation of Suspected Misconduct" policy.

## ***CLIENT RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES***

While participating in our services, you have the right to:

- Give informed consent for service and express choice regarding service delivery, release of information, and who will be involved in providing service.
- Services that are timely, caring, professional, and ethical.
- Express your opinions, values, and beliefs, and have them included or considered in anything that affects you. This includes the right to express and practice your religious and spiritual beliefs while receiving services.
- A copy of the agency's complaint procedure, have the procedure explained to you, and to file a complaint if you feel that your rights have not been respected or your concerns regarding the services you are receiving are not being addressed.
- Involve your family or legal guardian in the services you receive, including making decisions with you or on your behalf where appropriate.

- Have the information we collect as part of the services you receive kept in a secure, private and confidential manner. This includes the right to access your information in a timely manner.
- Receive services that are non-coercive and that protect your right to self-determination. This includes freedom from any form of abuse, exploitation, retaliation, humiliation or neglect.
- Have the rules, behavioral expectations, and other factors that might result in discharge or termination of services explained to you.
- Have your cultural heritage recognized, respected, and responded to as appropriate to the services you are receiving.
- Receive services in a healthy and safe environment.
- Referrals to appropriate services including legal entities and advocacy or self help services.
- Be informed about your plan of care.

All agency services are voluntary. Clients may refuse any service or treatment.

### ***WHAT IF I AM NOT ELIGIBLE FOR THIS SERVICE?***

If you are not eligible for this service, you will be provided with information about the reasons why you are not eligible and with information about other services you may be able to access. This could include both services we offer and other services available in the community. We will support you in accessing these services and help with the referral process if you need it. If you believe that you are eligible for this service and would like us to reconsider our decision, we encourage you to do so. Please follow the Client Complaints Policy provided in this booklet. If you need help with a complaint, please ask and we will assist with the process.

### ***STAFF QUALIFICATIONS***

All program staff employed at the Society have specialized training in their respective disciplines related to the services they deliver. If you would like information about the qualifications of a staff person you are working with, please ask and the information will be provided to you.

### ***PARITICIPATION IN PLANNING & SERVICE DELIVERY***

We encourage family participation in all of our services to the greatest extent possible. You have the right to have family members or your guardian(s) participate in the services you receive.

### ***INFORMATION ON FINANCIAL & OTHER ASSISTANCE***

You may be eligible for public assistance, such as a subsidy for childcare services, income assistance, or free dental clinics for you and your children. During the intake process, staff will discuss the various forms of assistance that may be available to you and assist you in accessing public assistance should you require it.

### ***ACCESS TO MY FILE***

We believe in open and accountable service. You have the right to see your personal information that is contained in your confidential file. You may make a written request to your worker who will then arrange to sit down with you and review the file.

### ***HEALTH & SAFETY OF CLIENTS***

We take the safety and security of both our clients and our staff very seriously. We have health and safety policies and procedures that our staff are familiar with and are required to follow. We maintain our equipment and facilities consistent with all applicable laws and regulations. We have regular Health and Safety meetings within the agency to address safety concerns. If you have any questions about safety or have any safety concerns, please feel free to ask or bring items to our attention.

### ***EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS***

Our organization has a series of policies and procedures in place designed to ensure safety in the event of an accident or other kind of emergency. Staff are familiar with these procedures and have specific training, such as First Aid, to deal with these situations. If you have any questions about emergency preparedness or about the training that our staff receives, please feel free to ask.

### ***ACCOMODATING SPECIAL NEEDS OR REQUESTS***

As part of our commitment to providing accessible services to all clients, we make efforts to minimize the impact of potential barriers to participating in services. We do our best to accommodate needs related to disabilities or special requests related to how we deliver our services, such as a request for a staff person with specific characteristics. If you have a disability that requires some accommodation or a request you would like to make, please speak to our staff and ask to fill out a request form.

### ***TOBACCO USE***

YCS endeavors to provide a safe and healthy work environment for staff and service recipients.



The following requirements have been established to maintain a safe working environment in relation to tobacco use:

- The use of all tobacco products is prohibited in all YCS buildings, facilities and vehicles. Smoking is prohibited within 10 meters of entrance doors. An exception may be made for the ceremonial use of tobacco in the context of YCS programming with the explicit written permission of the Executive Director.
- When possible, smoking will be prohibited at all indoor events wherever they are held except for designated areas or private rooms where ventilation prevents others from being exposed to second-hand smoke and is in compliance with building codes and regulatory authority.
- Where services are provided in your home, you will be asked to read and sign a Smoking Agreement detailing requests for you to refrain from smoking during which time the service is being provided.

## ***AFTER HOURS & EMERGENCY SERVICES***

Our program generally provides services during regular business hours. Should you need support or have an emergency outside of those hours, we encourage you to access other services appropriate to the type of need or emergency you are experiencing. This includes:

### Medical Needs or Emergencies:

- 1) Call 911 in the event of a medical emergency
- 2) Contact Healthlink BC for medical information and advice—811

### Emergency Need for Respite Care

- 1) Contact the Ministry of Children and Family Development After Hours at 310-1234

### Child Welfare or Mental Health Emergency

- 1) Interior Health Crisis Line 1-888-353-2273
- 2) After Hours Mental Health Support 310-6789
- 3) Ministry of Children and Family Development After Hours at 310-1234

### Domestic Violence

- 1) Call 911 in case of emergency
- 2) Safe Home: 250-674-2135 (Clearwater) and 1-855 674-2135 (Barriere)

