



Policy #01-056	
Approved by Johna Lee, CEO	
Total pages:	3
Effective Date:	April 2009
Revised Date:	November 2017

# Transparency & Accountability Policy

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## INTRODUCTION

Alternatives Inc. values its relationships with the Board of Trustees, committees, clients, members, donors, stakeholders, funders, and the general public. Alternatives Inc. realizes the importance of transparency and accountability in its operations and makes every attempt to disclose all information that is public.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to indicate which documents and materials produced by the organization are open to members and/or the public and by what means; and indicate which documents and materials produced by the organization are closed to members and/or the public.

## POLICY

### Board

1. All board deliberations shall be open to the public except where the board passes a motion to make any specific portion confidential.
2. All board minutes shall be open to the public once accepted by the board, except where the board passes a motion to make any specific portion confidential.
3. All materials considered by the board shall be open to the public following the meeting at which they are considered, except where the board passes a motion to make any specific item confidential.

### Client Records

The advocate/client relationship must be confidential at all times. Therefore, access to client files is limited to the following circumstances:

1. All direct service staff shall have access to client files according to the program area in which staff are assigned:
  - a) Direct service shelter staff shall have access to files of clients served in the shelter.
  - b) Children's Program staff shall have access to files of children served in the children's program.
  - c) Outreach Program staff shall have access to files of clients served in the outreach program. In the event an Outreach staff is providing services to a shelter client, Outreach staff will also have access to the client's shelter file.

2. All administrative staff may have access to client files following approval from the CEO.
3. Trained direct service volunteers may have access to client files with whom they have direct contact. Access must be only with the supervision of the Advocate assigned to the client on a need to know basis.
4. All clients shall have the right to inspect their own records.
5. Request for information from individuals or agencies outside of Alternatives Inc. must be received in writing. This information will be given out only under the expressed written permission of the client.
6. Monetary agencies (i.e. FSSA, Peer Review, United Way, other funders) may have access to files for quality control purposes; however, a confidentiality agreement must be signed before viewing any records that may contain protected information. Personally identifying information will be covered, redacted, or removed from records before they are viewed.
7. Alternatives Inc. cooperates with the Criminal Justice System. If a court order is issued for release of files, Alternatives Inc. works with the client to determine the client's best interest and respond either by releasing the file or having our attorney file a motion to quash. Our overall policy is the client records are confidential.

#### Personnel Records

1. Access to personnel records is limited to the employee, Chief Executive Officer, Chief Administrative Officer, Chief Operating Officer, Supervisor, Chairperson of the Personnel Committee, and to the members of the Personnel Committee when reviewing a complaint.
2. A log system will be utilized when a personnel file or item in the file is checked out by the above mentioned authorized personnel. The log will document who is reviewing the file, date and time, purpose of review, and date and time file or item was returned. The log must be signed by two authorized personnel at the time the file is removed and returned.
3. No personnel records shall be made available to any person outside the organization.
4. All inquiries about former or present employees will be referred to the Chief Executive Officer for response. The Chief Executive Officer only verifies dates of employment and position without a written release and, with a written release, only those items of documented performance related facts.

#### Member and Donor Records

1. The only member and/or donor information collected is: name; address; telephone number; email address; amount given; and preferred methods of communication.
2. All member and donor records shall be available for review by the members and/or donors concerned.

3. No member and/or donor detailed records shall be made available to any other person outside the organization.
4. Within the organization, member and/or donor records shall be made available only to those persons with managerial or personnel responsibilities for dealing with those records.
5. Information collected is used to maintain member and/or donor contributions to track corporate voting rights.
6. A list of all members and/or donors will be published annually unless instructed by the member and/or donor they wish to remain anonymous. The member and/or donor may change their preference at any time.

### Corporate Tax Returns

1. Upon completion of the Form 990 Tax Return, the Board of Trustees will be given a copy to review and approve prior to filing the return. The review and approval will be done either in a Board of Trustee meeting, by the Executive Committee, or electronically. The method will be determined based on the situation providing that filing the return is time sensitive.
2. The Form 990 Tax Return will be made public after approval is made by the Board of Trustees. The Form 1023 and Form 990 Tax Return are made available on the Alternatives Inc. website as a PDF file or by written request.

## **PROCEDURES**

### Requests for Access

1. Any request for access to records shall be made to the Chief Executive Officer.
2. Where requests are made for client files by any person not the client, the Chief Executive Officer or her/his designee shall inform the client of the request if possible. If a court order is issued for release of client files, Alternatives Inc. will work with the client to determine the client's best interest and respond either by releasing the file or having our attorney file a motion to quash.
3. Where requests are made for personnel records by any person not the staff member, the Chief Executive Officer only verifies dates of employment and position without a written release and, with a written release, only those items of documented performance related facts.
4. The Chief Executive Officer may, where appropriate, consult with the Board of Trustee or the agency's legal counsel.

## **RELATED DOCUMENTS**

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| 01-019 | Personnel Record Policy       |
| 02-001 | Access to Client Files Policy |
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