

Information for Parents

DoCS and other agencies involved in providing Brighter Futures services respect families' rights to privacy. Privacy legislation covers how your personal and health information is collected, stored, accessed and used, and the circumstances under which it can be disclosed to someone else. These laws were developed so that you can be sure that the personal information collected from you is used to help provide better services to you and your family.

To allow DoCS and the other Brighter Futures agencies to provide you and your family with the best possible services, we need to collect and use some of your personal information. To do this we require your consent. When you agree to Join Brighter Futures we will ask you to give your consent in writing by signing a form called *Consent to Exchange and Release Information Form*. Your Brighter Futures worker can explain the form to you and then record your consent on the form, including the date when they spoke with you about consent.

What is personal information used for?

Your personal information will always be used to ensure that Brighter Futures is providing you with the best possible services for your family.

DoCS needs certain personal information to:

- to know whether or not a family is eligible to receive Brighter Futures services, and
- to evaluate how well the program is meeting families' needs.

DoCS and the other agencies providing Brighter Futures services to families also require personal information about families to be able to assess the family's particular needs and ensure that each family member can receive the most appropriate services and support.

When is my consent required?

When you join the Brighter Futures program, you will be asked for your consent for your personal information to be:

- provided by a community agency to DoCS to assist in decisions about your eligibility for the program
- provided by one agency to another agency for the purpose of referring your family for services, or
- sought from another agency to assist with the assessment of your family's needs and which services would be the most appropriate for you; and
- used for research and program evaluation by the Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC) an independent evaluator engaged by DoCS to look at how the program is working for families and how it can be improved

Can I withdraw or limit my consent?

Yes, you can. However, if you do withdraw or limit your consent, it makes it very difficult for appropriate services to be provided to you and your children. Without the right information or not enough information, agencies will not be able to tell what your family needs. Without permission to share information with other services, an agency may not be able to link you to the services that can provide the right services for you and your family. You should discuss this matter with your caseworker so that everybody who is working with you and your family is clear what your wishes are.

Information for evaluation

As part of the effort to ensure that Brighter Futures will grow and continue to improve the services it provides to children and families in NSW, information from the program will be used in an evaluation by the Social Policy Research Centre at the University of NSW. The information will be collected and stored by DoCS and to ensure that your privacy is protected, personal information will be 'de-identified' before it is provided to the evaluation team. This means that information that can specifically identify you and your family members (eg your name and address) will be removed before it is sent to the university. DoCS knows that it is very important that this information is not passed on.

Further information

Keeping children safe is an important role of DoCS. If concerns are raised about a child's safety (via a report to the Helpline), DoCS can access, without parents' consent, any information held by a community or government agency, to help ensure the safety of that child.

If you need any further information or have any questions or concerns about the collection and use of your personal information you can discuss this with your caseworker. More information about privacy protection can be obtained from Privacy NSW (Phone 9228 8585, www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/lawlink/privacynsw).