



**Mandatory Reporting of Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation**

The Crisis Center commits to maintaining our clients’ right to privacy and confidentiality. There are circumstances, however, in which agency staff must by law disclose certain identifying client information. One circumstance would be if the Crisis Center suspects the abuse, neglect, or exploitation of a child, a person who is elderly, or a person with a disability.

According to Section 261.101 of the Texas Family Code and Section 48.051 of the Human Resources Code, the Crisis Center **staff must make a report to the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) in the following situations:**

1. When there is reason to believe that a child has been abused, neglected, or exploited.
2. When there is reason to believe that an individual who is elderly (65 years or older) or a person with a disability has been abused, neglected, or exploited.

**Notice of Confidentiality Rights**

At the Crisis Center you have the following rights regarding the confidentiality of your personal information and communications with the Crisis Center staff and volunteers:

1. The Crisis Center **will keep your information confidential to the greatest extent allowed by law.**
2. You may choose what information you want to provide to the Crisis Center. **The Crisis Center will not deny you access to services if you choose not to provide certain identifying information.**
3. As a client of the Crisis Center, you have the **right to request and receive a copy of your records.** If you would like to do so, please work with your advocate to submit a request to the custodian of records at the Crisis Center.
4. After your first appointment with the Crisis Center, you may choose a referral to other partner agencies for additional help and support. **You decide how much or how little of your personal information the Crisis Center will or will not share with each partner agency.** An advocate will offer a general overview of each partner’s obligations to keep your information confidential. If you choose to have the Crisis Center share some of your personal information with a partner agency, an advocate will explain exactly *how* and *what* information will be shared. If you later decide that you do not want the information shared with any Crisis Center partners, let us know and we will not share any more information with those partners.

**Privilege**

Privilege typically means:

- 1) a court cannot force a survivor or her advocate to disclose information shared between the advocate and survivor, and
- 2) neither the advocate nor the survivor can be punished for a refusal to disclose the information

(NNEDV: A Primer on Privilege & Confidentiality For Victim Service Providers)

**Wellness & Empowerment**

ReRead “Tell Me About Yourself” page 2 “What are you most concerned about at this time?” Restate clients concerns and “What Help Do You Need?” Briefly write below: \_\_\_\_\_

Set 1<sup>st</sup> Case Management with Client in CLIENT SERVICES Calendar: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_ time \_\_\_\_\_

**Grievance Procedure**

The Crisis Center values your input on how we provide services and wants to hear about your experience. Any information you provide will be taken seriously and will help us continue to improve our services for every survivor. Please contact the Program Coordinator at 903.893.3909 for a Grievance Form. Full form and procedure provided with initial packet to survivor.



## **General Liability Waiver**

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The Crisis Center is unable to assume any liability on behalf of clients, whether resident or nonresident. Please read the following statements releasing the Crisis Center from liability and indicate your understanding by your signature below.

I AGREE to respect the persons, privacy and possessions of the clients, staff, and volunteers of the Crisis Center and to ensure that my children do the same.

I RECOGNIZE that I alone am responsible for my safety and health, the safety and health of my children, and the safety and health of any other persons who might accompany me. I alone am responsible for my (our) possessions. The staff and/or volunteers at the Crisis Center cannot safeguard or be responsible for me, my children, or our possessions.

In respect to the services provided by the Crisis Center to me and to those accompanying me, I UNDERSTAND that the Crisis Center assumes no liability or responsibility whatsoever in connection with the services provided, for any act of omission or commission which might be constituted as negligence; nor for any loss, theft, or injury to persons or property; nor, during any transportation by staff, volunteers, or clients to or from any location; nor for any illness, damage, or inconvenience sustained by me, my children, or others accompanying me.

I AGREE to hold the Crisis Center, its staff, employees, interns, agents, volunteers, contributors, officers and directors harmless from any and all claims, demands, debts, responsibilities, and/or liability relating to me, my children, or those accompanying me.

## **Safety & Security Procedures**

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*The Crisis Center maintains the following policies and systems for safety and security:*

- The Crisis Center maintains a 24 hour security system with 16 cameras, maintained and monitored by “SSD security systems”.
- The Crisis Center also maintains 12 outside security lighting units.
- There is an exterior and separate interior door locking system.
- The center maintains two silent panic buttons that report directly to the local police department and to the security monitoring service.
- Residential Clients park behind a fenced, gated area.
- Non-Residential Clients enter the building through the front door.
- The facility alarm is set at midnight and remains on until 6 am.
- **In case of an emergency**, alarm, or threat, clients will be directed by staff to a safe location.
- **If an offender comes to the shelter**, staff will not confirm or deny presence of victim or client status, will not allow offender into facility, and will alert police of offender presence immediately. Afterwards, advocates will address victim’s safety; if residential client, will relocate victim if necessary.
- **We encourage survivors to limit social media for safety reasons** which includes turning off location services and limiting or eliminating interactions on social platforms while in residence and/or on site.
- **Pictures are not allowed** in shelter of anything or anyone as it places the safety of other clients, staff, and/or volunteers at risk. This includes classroom settings.
- **Facetime is not allowed** in shelter as it places the safety of other clients, staff, and/or volunteers at risk. This includes classroom settings.

## **Nondiscrimination Statement (Federal & City ADA Info Provided on page 10-11)**

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We will not discriminate against anyone seeking services based on the following:

- Type of abuse
- HIV status
- Having a primary language that is not English
- Income
- Number of previous times services have been sought from this organization or other family violence/sexual assault programs
- How long it has been since the family violence happened
- Geographic location, such as the county you are from
- Number of children accompanying the victim
- Race, religion, language, color, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression
- Mental or physical disability
- Mental health or substance abuse issue
- Immigration status or national origin
- Age – including minors with some considerations



## **Termination Policy**

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If my behavior puts the safety of other clients, staff, and/or volunteers at risk, the Crisis Center may exit me from shelter services both residential and/or non-residential.

If the Crisis Center residential facilities are full and my safety risks have been mitigated and/or the services I requested have been provided, the Crisis Center may exit me from residential services; I will still be able to receive non-residential services.

If the Crisis Center terminates me from shelter services, I understand that I can request:

- An exit interview in order to discuss services
- A safety plan
- Referrals to other community resources that may be of assistance to me.

The Crisis Center will make every reasonable effort to have the exit process planned collaboratively by client and advocate.

I also understand that I have a right to file a grievance (complaint) or an appeal if I believe that the exit and/or termination are not appropriate. My advocate can provide me with that form. I also understand that the Crisis Center will retain my records for seven years, and that I have a right to request a copy.

I also understand that I can request contact information for the Health & Human Services Commission Family Violence Program for complaint purposes.

## **Clients Rights & Responsibilities**

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*The Crisis Center agrees that every client has the right to:*

- Participate in creating a safe environment.
- Receive respect without discrimination on the basis of national origin, religion, race, color, gender identity or sexual orientation.
- Have your interests and self-determination recognized without blame or judgement. We are here to support you in making your own decisions.
- Have your civil and legal rights honored and upheld.
- Have your private information kept confidential and only released with your specific written consent, except when the information disclosed is subject to mandatory reporting as required by laws and regulations.
- An explanation of all policies, procedures, expectations, client rights, and other relevant information, especially any document requiring your signature in your preferred language.
- Be responded to respectfully without opinion or judgment when offering your statement of events. If a conflict with a staff member arises that you feel cannot be resolved, you can speak with Heather Mahaffey, Program Coordinator, as outlined in the Crisis Center's Grievance Policy.
- Have an advocate, when requested and when possible, advocate on your behalf.
- Be provided with personalized services, including referrals that are in your best interest. You also have the right to refuse any services and to discuss with staff any concerns or disagreements regarding services.
- Be supported in your role as a parent. Staff and volunteers will ask permission before caring for your children or providing them with food or medicine. We want your children to understand that you, not we, are watching out for them and meeting their needs.
- Not be exploited or abused in any way by a staff, volunteer, or board member of this organization.



## **COOPERATIVE LIVING AGREEMENT**

### **Length of Stay Policy**

The Crisis Center is not required to have a maximum length of stay policy; however, if the Crisis Center is full and my safety risks have been mitigated and/or the services I requested have been provided, the Crisis Center may exit me from shelter.

### **Notice about Belongings**

Due to the communal living situations and the unavailability of storage in this facility, the Crisis Center does not take responsibility or liability for the security of residents' belongings.

Space is limited in shelter and rooms are shared; personal belongings must be kept to a minimum.

**Upon exiting shelter services, any personal belongings left at Crisis Center by clients will be thrown away/destroyed immediately.**

### **Residents' Medication Policy**

The Crisis Center provides lockers to residents for the safekeeping of and immediate access to medications for residents and their children. Residents must keep all medications out of the reach of children. Staff will help make other arrangements for certain medications, medications that require refrigeration or medication required to be on their person, such as inhalers for asthma. Residents are responsible for the self-administration of medications and the administering of their children's medications; staff may never administer medications or medical advice, including recommended dosages, to residents and their children.

### **Safety**

For Client, Staff and Volunteer safety all clients must initially enter the building through the front door/foyer area. If a client leaves the center for more than 24 hours or overnight, for any reason, the client must present at the front door/foyer area. Each time a client presents at the front door/foyer, they will be reevaluated for needs.



### **COOPERATIVE LIVING AGREEMENT**

*As a part of creating a safe, healthy, and non-abusive community, I agree to the following:*

- Preventing abuse and violence by not engaging in physical, emotional, or verbal abuse with other residents, staff, or volunteers. I will not bring drugs, alcohol, weapons, or other unsafe items onto the Crisis Center's property.
- Respecting the private information and safety of other clients by not discussing names of, or information about, other clients except with Crisis Center staff if necessary.
- Committing to create a cooperative living space by maintaining the shared and private spaces.
- Committing to create a cooperative living space by maintaining the shared spaces.
- I understand that my children must be supervised at all times, and that my children should never be in the building without me.
- Valuing other clients' and staff's beliefs and being respectful of opinions that differ from my own opinions.



## Grievance (Complaint) Procedures

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The Crisis Center values your input on how we provide services and wants to hear about your experience. Any information you provide will be taken seriously and will help us continue to improve our services for every survivor.

If you have a question or complaint about something that occurred while you were at the Crisis Center, the first step is to discuss this with your advocate.

If you are not able to come to an acceptable result after discussing the issue with your advocate or do not feel comfortable talking about the issue with them, the Crisis Center encourages you to submit a grievance or complaint. If you prefer not to submit it in writing, please ask to talk to Heather Mahaffey, Program Coordinator. The Crisis Center will make every reasonable attempt to review your grievance within 3 business days. The Program Coordinator will review your grievance first, followed by the Executive Director if necessary.

If a resolution is not achieved through these steps, you can request that the grievance go before the Board of Directors who will make every reasonable attempt to review it within 5 business days. This is the final step in the grievance process and the decision made at this point will stand as the final decision from the Crisis Center.

*If you have a complaint that is not resolved to your satisfaction, you can contact the HHS Office of the Ombudsman by calling 1-877-787-8999, selecting a language, and then Option 3, or by making an online submission at <https://hhs.texas.gov/about-hhs/your-rights/office-ombudsman>.*

Follow the steps below to file a grievance with the Crisis Center:

Write up the grievance (complaint) and sign and date it. Your advocate can provide you with a form or you may write your own. If you prefer not to submit it in writing please ask to speak to Heather Mahaffey, Program Coordinator. Include the following details:

- a. Name and advocate's name
- b. Details about the situation or concern
- c. Date of the issue or incident
- d. Any specific way you would like to see the issue resolved



## Grievance (Complaint) Procedures

Client Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Advocate's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Details about the situation or concern (attach additional pages if needed): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Date of the issue or incident: \_\_\_\_\_

A specific way you would like to see the issue resolved: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Client Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Is it ok for us to contact you about your grievance?  Yes  No

Contact Information (phone and/or email): \_\_\_\_\_

Form completed by (if assistance was used while completing this form):

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

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**P. O. Box 2112, 4200 N. Travis Street, Sherman, TX 75091**  
**~Hotline (903) 893-5615**  
**~ Phone (903) 893-3909 ~ Fax (903) 893-0892**  
**Web Site: [www.graysoncrisiscenter.org](http://www.graysoncrisiscenter.org)**



## Confidentiality Information for Adult Clients

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1. the right to see their records;
2. the kind of information recorded, why and the methods of collection:  
A center must limit the information kept in a resident's or a nonresident's files to information necessary for:
  1. statistical and funding purposes;
  2. establishing goals for intervention and advocacy;
  3. documenting the need for and delivery of services; and
  4. protecting the liability of the center and its employees, volunteers, and board members.
3. who within the center has access to the client's case files and records;
  - a. Employees of the Crisis Center and Direct Service Volunteers
4. an overview of the centers policy and practices on confidentiality;
  - a. Enclosed in this package
5. current state and federal laws regarding the limits of confidentiality under the law, including mandatory reporting for abuse or suspected abuse of:
  - a. Children
  - b. The elderly
  - c. People with disabilities
    - i. Enclosed in this package
6. an overview of the center's policy for requests for information under the Public Information Act;
  - a. The Grayson Crisis Center complies with the PIA
    - i. The Public Information Act (PIA) provides a mechanism for citizens to inspect or copy government records. It also provides that governmental bodies may withhold government records from the public in specific instances.
    - ii. Clients can obtain information regarding their rights here - [Overview of the Public Information Act | Office of the Attorney General \(texasattorneygeneral.gov\)](#)
7. an overview of the center's policy for release of information;
  - a. Enclosed in this package
8. when the records will be decoded or destroyed; and
  - a. If a client is not active, no services within the last calendar year, the records are decoded and destroyed after the 7<sup>th</sup> year from the initial intake date.
9. an overview of what kind of information will remain in the file once a client terminates services.  
A center must limit the information kept in a resident's or a nonresident's files to information necessary for:
  1. statistical and funding purposes;
  2. establishing goals for intervention and advocacy;
  3. documenting the need for and delivery of services; and
  4. protecting the liability of the center and its employees, volunteers, and board members.





## Communicable Diseases Procedures

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### Health & Hygiene

#### *Practices to Prevent the Spread of Contagious Diseases*

1. Residential clients will be provided sanitizing and cleaning products.
2. All communal areas must be cleaned after use by individuals this includes kitchen, bathroom, sleeping, and children's area, including children's toys and highchairs.
3. Clients must always wear gloves in the kitchen.
4. Gloves will be provided by the Crisis Center.
5. Any residential client with a communicable disease will be quarantined in their bedroom as much as possible. As long as the resident is contagious staff will bring meals to the residents' room and the resident will not be allowed in areas where they may come in contact with other residents. Residents will be informed, if necessary, of any communicable diseases present in the shelter while maintaining confidentiality of the contagious resident.
6. Clients seeking shelter at the center who have a communicable disease will be evaluated on whether the disease is a safety hazard for present residents. This will be done on an individual basis. If the client is denied admission, staff will assist the client in finding shelter and developing a safety plan. A designated staff member will communicate with the local health department on present information concerning communicable diseases.

#### *Schedule of Immunizations*

[2023 Recommended Immunizations for Children from Birth Through 6 Years Old \(cdc.gov\)](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/imz/managing/2023-recommended-immunizations-for-children-from-birth-through-6-years-old.html)

[2023 Recommended Immunizations for Children 7–18 Years Old \(cdc.gov\)](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/imz/managing/2023-recommended-immunizations-for-children-7-18-years-old.html)

#### *Why Get Vaccinated*

[Reasons for Adults to be Vaccinated | CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/imz/managing/why-get-vaccinated.html)

#### *Vaccine-Preventable Adult Diseases*

[Vaccine Preventable Adult Diseases | CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/imz/managing/vaccine-preventable-adult-diseases.html)

#### *How to Pay for Vaccines*

[How to Pay for Adult Vaccines | CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/imz/managing/how-to-pay-for-vaccines.html)



## Nondiscrimination Statement

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# ADA Requirements: Service Animals

Some individuals with disabilities utilize the services of trained animals to provide themselves with direct assistance in daily life. Service animals, often referred to as assistance animals, are permitted to accompany a person with a disability anywhere in the shelter. Clients with true service animals are not required to register animals with the center but must abide by the federal requirements for service animals and provide vaccination records.

### *Important Information Regarding Service Animals*

- A service animal is a dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for a person with a disability.
- **Under the ADA, State and local governments, businesses, and nonprofit organizations that serve the public generally must allow service animals to accompany people with disabilities in all areas of the facility where the public is allowed to go.**
- **A service animal must be under the control of its handler. Under the ADA, service animals must be harnessed, leashed, or tethered, unless the individual's disability prevents using these devices or these devices interfere with the service animal's safe, effective performance of tasks.** In that case, the individual must maintain control of the animal through voice, signal, or other effective controls.
- When it is not obvious what service an animal provides, only limited inquiries are allowed. Staff may ask two questions: (1) is the dog a service animal required because of a disability, and (2) what work or task has the dog been trained to perform. Staff cannot ask about the person's disability, require medical documentation, require a special identification card or training documentation for the dog, or ask that the dog demonstrate its ability to perform the work or task.
- The Crisis Center adheres to both federal requirements and city ordinances.

[ADA Requirements: Service Animals | ADA.gov](#)

### *City of Sherman Ordinances*



## Pet & Animal Ordinances

Below are summaries of some important ordinances relating to pets and animals.

### Requirements

The City of Sherman ordinances requires the following:

- All pets are required to be properly vaccinated against rabies. This follows after their initial vaccination against rabies at the age of three months.
- All pets must wear their current rabies vaccination tags at all times. These tags are vital if your pet is lost, stolen or injured while running at large.
- An animal owner must keep their pet on a leash at all times in public areas, such as parks. While out-of-doors on the owner's private property, an unattended animal must be left within a fence adequate or fastened to an approved dog trolley / zip line system capable of preventing escape of the animal to prevent the dog from leaving the yard.
- It is unlawful for a pet owner or any person to:
  - Abuse or cruelly mistreat any animal; fail to give an animal proper food, water and shelter; or to abandon an animal
  - Allow their animal to run free in city parks
  - Allow their pet's quarters to become unsanitary and create odors to others
  - Fail to prevent their animal from running at large within the city limits
  - Harbor an animal that is not vaccinated against rabies
  - Harbor a vicious animal within the city limits
- What may happen if you do not take proper care of your pet:
  - All strays are held for three days and then become the property of the city. At that time, they are either placed in the adoption program or put to sleep, depending on available space in the shelter.
  - It may be impounded at the City of Sherman Animal Shelter, and you will be charged to reclaim your pet. You may also be issued citations.
  - It may be killed or injured on the streets or highways of the city.
  - You may be summoned to [Municipal Court](#) for not complying with the [City Code of Ordinances](#).

<https://shermananimalshelter.com/animal-ordinances>

These are based off the values of the Crisis Center and the following state and national regulations: Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title VI; Texas Administrative Code Chpt. 395; 42 USC Chpt. 110; Rehabilitation Act of 1973; Americans with Disabilities Act; Age Discrimination Act; Texas Family Code 32. 004; Human Resources Code, Chpt. 31; Texas Health and Safety Code §85. 113 and §85. 114.