

Eating Disorders:

Confidentiality

Family members or significant others can support an individual throughout the assessment, treatment and recovery phases of an eating disorder. In fact, involvement in treatment from support people is usually associated with better treatment outcomes.

The level of involvement of support people may depend on the individuals age, the type of relationship you have with them and whether permission or consent has been provided for them to be involved and to what extent.

Responsibilities of the Health Professional

All health professionals are legally required to maintain their patient's confidentiality.

However, there are exceptions if:

- You have given permission to the health professional to share personal information with your support people or other members of your treating team.
- The health professional believes you may hurt yourself or someone else.
- The health professional is legally required to share confidential information.

In all other circumstances, if the health professional, family members or significant others want to have more transparency in treatment, they will first need permission from the individual.

Confidentiality for Minors

In Australia, many states permit young people (between the ages of 14-16) to seek mental health care without requiring that parents be notified. If a young person has the capacity to consent to medical treatment on their own behalf, then they are generally also entitled to confidentiality. This includes the right for their health information to be kept confidential from their parents.

However, treatment for an eating disorder is complex. It is best practice for the family and/or support people of children and adolescents to be actively involved throughout treatment.

At the start of treatment, the health professional will discuss the ground rules for privacy and will clearly explain the boundaries of confidentiality. That way both the individual and the family know exactly what type of information is going to be shared and what is going to be kept confidential.

If you have any concerns around confidentiality, speak to the health professionals providing care to clearly clarify the boundaries and limitations of confidentiality.

