CONFIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS: 4020

The District recognizes that school staff must exercise a delicate balance regarding the treatment of information that was revealed in confidence. A staff member may, in his/her professional judgment, treat information received from a student as confidential, while at other times decide to disclose what was learned to the school administration, law enforcement officers (including Child Protective Services), the county health department, other staff members or the student's parents. The staff member should advise the student regarding the limitations and restrictions regarding confidentiality. The student should be encouraged to reveal confidences to his/her parents. If the staff member intends to advise the parents, the student should be informed prior to such action.

The following guidelines are established to assist staff members in making appropriate decisions regarding confidential information and/or communications:

A. Information contained in the student's cumulative record folder is confidential and is only accessible through the custodian of student records. Information secured through the authorization of the records custodian shall remain confidential and shall be used only for the purpose that its access was granted. (Policy – 3231)

B. The release of information regarding staff members is governed by Policies – 5260 and 4040.

C. While certain professionals may have a legal/confidential relationship as in attorney-client communications, school staff members including counselors (except licensed psychologists) do not possess a confidentiality privilege.

D. A staff member is expected to reveal information given by a student when there is a reasonable likelihood that a crime has or will be committed, (e.g. child abuse, sale of drugs, suicidal ideation).

E. A staff member should exercise professional judgment regarding the disclosure of confidential information or any student disclosed information when there is reasonable likelihood that the student's general welfare may endangered.

F. If District officials determine there is a specific threat to the health or safety of a student or any other individual, the District may disclose otherwise confidential student information to appropriate parties, as allowed by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

G. A staff member is encouraged to assist the student by offering suggestions regarding the availability of community services to assist a student in dealing with personal matters, (e.g. sexual activity, sexually-transmitted diseases, pregnancy). The staff member should encourage the student to discuss such matters with his/her parents first. Staff members are encouraged to discuss problems of this nature with the school principal prior to making contact with others.

H. Building principals must make this information available to district administrators.

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Cross References:	Administrative Policy – 3432	Emergencies
	Administrative Policy – 3231	Student Records
	Administrative Policy – 4040	Public Access to District Records
	Administrative Policy – 5260	Personnel Records

Legal References:	RCW 26.44.030	Reports–Duty and authority to make–Duty of receiving agency–Duty to notify–Case planning and consultation–Penalty for unauthorized exchange of information–Filing dependency petitions–Investigations–Interviews of children–Records–Risk assessment process