

Documentation Matters: Tip #1

How should social workers respond when a client asks not to record something in their file?

Social workers who receive these requests from clients would need to consider this from the perspective of “relevant information”.

- Is this information relevant to the service delivery and continuity of care?
- What are the risks of recording or not recording?
- Would client care be impacted?
- What is the client’s reason and expectation for disclosing information and not wanting it documented?
- Was documentation, including its purpose, addressed as part of the informed consent process?
- Does anyone else in the ‘circle of care’ need to know this information?

Social workers use their clinical judgement and make decisions in the best interests of clients. It is important to help clients understand why relevant information needs to be documented. It might be appropriate to record sensitive information in more general terms, however, omitting relevant details at a client’s request (i.e. to avoid embarrassment) could put the social worker in a position where their decision-making or the record is challenged.

NLASW has several practice resources addressing the topic of documentation that can be accessed on the website at www.nlasw.ca including *Standards for Social Work Recording* (2014) and a self-assessment tool on documentation and informed consent. Consultation with colleagues may also be helpful.

