



CONFIDENTIALITY, PRIVACY AND TRANSPARENCY POLICY

Summary

Private communication between teachers and students begins with trust and an assumption of privacy. Most such conversations will remain confidential, with important exceptions explained below. Information known to others or otherwise made known to other members of the sangha or the public, such as material shared in meetings, is not considered confidential. There is no presumption of confidentiality in regard to information that conflicts with the Safe Environment Policy, with details explained below.

Formal Sanzen

Formal sanzen takes place in a ritualized space and has the highest level of confidentiality. However, consultation with other teachers and leaders may be important in some cases. Examples might include a student having a powerful experience which may affect his or her behavior; material that is very distressing to the teacher; behavior which may have an impact on the sangha. Such disclosure is at the discretion of the teacher, with the intention to support one's ability to be of the most complete benefit to the student.

Informal Sanzen

"Informal" sanzen or spiritual interview takes place in a more casual, although still private, space, and may sometimes include impersonal material such as temple business. A presumption of confidentiality is still given. Material that is disclosed to others and brought up in such a conversation is not considered confidential per se, although the specific details shared in the private conversation should be protected as far as this is appropriate.

Peer-to-Peer Communication

Peer-to-peer communication, including that with practice advisors, has no presumption of confidentiality. A promise of confidentiality may be made, if appropriate, but cannot be enforced. Residency is a special situation in which private communications may need to be shared with seniors. This is covered in more detail in the Residency agreements.

Exceptions to Confidentiality

Certain material *cannot* remain private, if it falls within the mandatory reporting guidelines adopted by the temple in its Safe Environment Policy. This includes a disclosure of recent harm to a vulnerable person or an animal; a threat of imminent harm to a vulnerable person or an animal; a threat of imminent harm to one's self; knowledge of weapons being kept by residents, or brought on to the temple grounds.

Sexual Offenders

The Safe Environment Policy has guidelines for how people with a history as sexual offenders are integrated into temple activities. In these cases, only the Safe Environment Committee (SEC) needs to be aware of the person's status, as they are to be accompanied by escorts at all times. There is no presumption of confidentiality for disclosures of sexual offenses or sexual offender status as defined within the Safe Environment Policy. Such information will be disclosed to the Safe Environment Committee, and may include disclosure to other individuals as outlined in the policy.

Mental Health Crises

People in a mental health crisis are identified to individuals in the sangha to the degree necessary to provide for sangha safety. This may include a selected group of people, the formal leadership, or the entire membership as appropriate.