

**Dharma Rain Zen Center**  
**CONFIDENTIALITY, PRIVACY AND TRANSPARENCY POLICY**  
**(updated April 23, 2015)**

**How Private is Sanzen?**

Respect and kindness are core values at Dharma Rain. Open and honest communication requires confidence that information disclosed will be treated with respect and discretion. Formal and informal sanzen, which are private communications between members and authorized teachers, are generally considered confidential. "Confidentiality," however, is also a legal term with specific implications which require a carefully considered policy. Our policy does not mandate strict confidentiality in all circumstances. There are situations in which information may be shared; anonymously in consultation with another professional is one example. Details about that are outlined in this policy document. In addition, we have elected to follow the guidelines for mandatory reporters for vulnerable populations, with some exceptions. For details on that policy, please see the [Safe Environment Policy and Procedures](#).

**Confidentiality, Privacy, and Transparency Policy**

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 and Procedures*, 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*

A registered sexual offender who wishes to pursue practice at Dharma Rain Zen Center must authorize disclosure of confidential information and agree to adhere to a Conditional Attendance Agreement as described in the *Safe Environment Policy and Procedures*.

*Mental Health Crises*

People in a mental health crisis or who have been forbidden to enter temple grounds 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.