

FAMILY VIOLENCE PROGRAM SHELTER CENTER SHELTER LOCATION

Rules and Laws

- RULE §379.503 & 379.504 Security Policies and Procedures
- The Family Violence Prevention and Services chapter of U.S. Code Title 42, Chapter 110, §10402(a)(2)(E).

FVPSA Text

§ 1370.4

What confidentiality requirements apply to these programs?

(g) The address or location of any shelter facility assisted that maintains a confidential location shall, except with written authorization of the person or persons responsible for the operation of such shelter, not be made public.

(1) Shelters which choose to remain confidential pursuant to this rule must develop and maintain systems and protocols to remain secure, which must include policies to respond to disruptive or dangerous contact from abusers,

- HHSC historically has interpreted "person or persons responsible for the operations of the shelter" as the board of directors and the executive director.
- To reference the code, go to <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/42/chapter-110>

Notes

Confidentiality of Shelter Locations - The Family Violence Prevention and Services (FVPSA) requires the shelter center to guarantee the confidentiality of its shelter location(s) unless it obtains written authorization of the person or persons responsible for the operations of the shelter.

Suggested Practices

- When determining whether to have the shelter facility be either a public location or a confidential location, the shelter center should weigh all of the philosophical concerns regarding safety and security issues.
- Because of the rapid advancement of technologies, a shelter center and survivors are at greater risk of stalking and breaches of confidentiality. A shelter center should consider addressing the security of technologies used within the organization and by survivors, such as cell phones, cordless telephones, computer databases, Internet access and e-mail.

Suggestions for Becoming a Public Location

Process

- Meet with the board to discuss the process for becoming a public location.
- Consider notifying HHSC of your board's intention to become a public location if required.
- Identify community partners and request their support in becoming a public location.
- Consider asking for a commitment from local law enforcement to do the following, but keep in mind not all survivors will want to work with law enforcement. For the latter bullet point be prepared to ask survivors if this feels safe and supportive or if they prefer another form of transport.
 - Patrol the shelter parameters as often as availability allows
 - Rapidly respond to intruders on site, and
 - Escort survivors to the shelter
- Community partners to get involved should include law enforcement and may include donors, area social service agencies, judges, neighbors, Mayor's office or other city administration, etc.
- Create a community supported safety plan for going public, and request that community partners endorse the plan
- Aside from community support, the program must have a security system in place. This may include, but is not limited to, an alarm system, special lighting, dead bolts, and agreements with local law enforcement. . (RULE §379.503 & 379.504).
- Once the program has officially converted from a confidential location to a public one, notify HHSC and any other funders, as required.

Additional Safety and Security Measures

- Partner with a local thrift store to directly receive donations on the shelter's behalf and provide vouchers for clients to shop at the store. This will eliminate unnecessary traffic and distraction at the shelter while alleviating storage issues.
- Install security cameras. (We talked about your concerns with destruction of the equipment. Regardless of the height and accessibility of the cameras, the cameras may capture footage of intruders on site, including someone approaching to destroy or vandalize the cameras. There are camera types out there that can be hidden or camouflaged.)
- Start a community donation wish list that includes a fund and needed items for security enhancement.

