

INFORMATION PROTECTION GUIDELINES

MaineHousing and its business partners rely on computer technology that is powerful and far-reaching to facilitate our ability to serve clients throughout the state of Maine. Every day, information systems process, store, and transmit confidential client information and sensitive data. Keeping protected information secure is an obligation mandated by state and federal laws, along with contractual agreements between MaineHousing and its partners – and it's the right thing to do.

PERSONALLY IDENTIFIABLE INFORMATION

Personally Identifiable Information (PII) is any information about an individual that can be used to distinguish or trace an individual's identity. PII is also any other information that is linked (or linkable) to an individual, such as medical or financial information.

Examples of PII include, but are not limited to:

- **any** information provided by applicants or participants in MaineHousing programs (includes information provided by third parties working on behalf of an applicant/participant).
- personal identification numbers, such as social security number (SSN), passport number, driver's license number.
- financial account or credit card information, including account numbers, card numbers, expiration dates, cardholder name, or service codes.
- healthcare / medical information disclosed to MaineHousing.
- names and addresses of clients participating in MaineHousing programs or on waiting lists.
- the address of a shelter or other living accommodations for victims of domestic violence.

The format that the information is in **does not** matter! Paper records, electronic files, and email can all contain protected information.

INFORMATION PROTECTION MEASURES

- **Encrypt all Personally Identifiable Information contained on computers, laptops, and portable electronic devices, such as CD's and USB drives.**
 - File Encryption converts the contents of a file so as to make them unreadable to others, unless they have the correct password. There are several free, open-source encryption software applications available on-line that are fairly easy to use. One of them can be found at <http://www.truecrypt.org/>. The Beginner's Tutorial is very helpful and explains step by step how to encrypt files and folders. Once a folder is set up on your computer, laptop or portable device, a password is needed to access the files.
- **Send e-mails or e-mail attachment with Personally Identifiable Information through a secure e-mail server.**
 - If you do not have access to an application that encrypts e-mail, you may send an e-mail to your contact at MaineHousing and request that they send you a secure e-mail. You can then reply back to that e-mail (using the same secure e-mail system) and your e-mail and attachments will be encrypted.
- **Put measures in place to prevent the loss, theft, misappropriation or inadvertent disclosure of Personally Identifiable Information.**
 - Remove documents that contain Personally Identifiable Information from printers or fax machines, do not leave paperwork containing Personally Identifiable Information on desks or other work areas unattended, place paperwork containing Personally Identifiable Information in a locked file at the end of the business day, and shred documents containing Personally Identifiable Information that are no longer needed.

If you suspect or become aware of a failure to protect Personally Identifiable Information, notify your contact at MaineHousing immediately.