

## THERAPEUTIC CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality is a cornerstone of the KHK treatment program (as demonstrated by the TBB and TIG rules.) It is mandatory that parents take confidentiality as seriously as staff, while still developing the friendships among families that are also so important to the program. The support of new families while they learn that their children are being well attended and cared for helps them let go and helps them trust the program. That trust builds when parents are assured that discussions among program parents about their child are constructive and caring and respectful. For treatment to be effective, it is important that both the phasers and their families be confident that their privacy is being respected.

It is the law that what is said or done or expressed in a treatment environment be kept confidential. In this program, the treatment environment extends to the car and to the host homes. The confidentiality laws are in effect in those situations.

Each teen has the right to know that what he says in confidence will not be repeated without his express consent. This allows a client to relax and trust the other clients, then the staff, and then also the families with whom he stays.

These teens have learned to use negative behavior to create enough space to use/abuse. Unfortunately, they have isolated themselves with this behavior. Learning to let people (especially adults) get close to them again takes time. A troubled teen has the right to know that his uncooperative behavior in one home is not coloring his reputation in other homes. Not discussing negative behavior with other program parents gives them that time, and allows them a chance to start fresh in each new home.

These troubled teens frequently have been banned from homes that used to welcome them. An important element of this program is that teens learn again the wonderful feeling of being welcomed by their friends' parents. Even when a newcomer is uncooperative, it is important that they not get the sense that they are not wanted in the household. It is especially important that they not get the feeling that they are getting a reputation – again. Realistically, not every parent will love every child. But every parent is expected to respect every child and to care about their well-being – especially the child that works at being un-likeable.

The family that trusts their teen to the program has the right to know that any discussion about their teen among program parents happens because of concern for the well being of the teen and the program. Any specific concern or report of a specific behavior should be made to the clinical staff, not ever to anyone else!

It is ok to make general comments to worried new parents. Comments to other program parents should be kept to a minimum, and should be as positive as possible.

He's still having a hard time.

The old comers are working with him a lot.

Your son seems to miss you, and seems sad sometimes. We care about him a lot.

Comments that are too specific can create a negative attitude on the part of the listener, and can isolate the newcomer from people he has not even met yet. They are not therapeutic – or legal!

He refuses to ask permission.

I don't like the way he watches me.

Your son says he misses you. (a quote without permission)

He has been rude.

He says he thinks about drugs still. (a quote without permission)

**It is never ok to lie to make parents feel better. However, it is ok to focus on the positives and forget the negatives. We have all seen troubled and angry and misbehaving teens become charming and cooperative as they engage in the program. Confidentiality gives that process time to evolve.**