

Confidentiality in your Co-op Placement

When a business agrees to accept a high school student for a co-op placement that business is taking a huge risk. Not only are there insurance and safety issues but **privacy** and **confidentiality** issues as well.

All businesses have secrets. Things such as salary, medical issues of their employees, the amount of cash they have on site, the cost of things they buy to resell or the actual customers who walk into the store. All of this information is open to the employees – but is kept a secret from the general public.

Now most of our co-op placements are not in a top secret setting but every business has information that is shared and talked about every day at work that is not to be talked about outside of the business.

The health and medical placements generally ask for a Confidentiality Agreement to be signed before the student attends their co-op placement. If for example you are working in a hospital – you are not allowed to disclose that you saw your neighbor Mrs. Smith in the cancer ward. That personal medical information is not to be shared outside of the Hospital – that would be against Mrs. Smith’s personal rights. As a co-op student in the hospital you are bound by the same rules.

This information is important when you have a full time job as well. Get use to not talking about anything specific – use vague details or omit the facts if you must repeat the story.

Photographs and Social Media

Most co-op students carry phones with cameras. Your phone should be off and away during your co-op hours. Texting and making/receiving calls is a real annoyance to your co-op supervisor. The supervisor has to follow their company rules and during your placement hours so you have to follow the same company rules.

While the Career Project does require you to take photographs of yourself and/or your supervisor at work be sure to get permission first. If you are photographing your adult supervisor doing a certain task – ask for permission first. Never photograph any children or other students. Some placements are in elementary and secondary schools where the privacy policy of the School Board is in place. Violation of the school policy can carry some heavy consequences. Never post any picture on any form of social media (Facebook) taken while at co-op. Respect the privacy of others at all times.

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Here is a list of some things that you might incur at the workplace which you CAN NOT talk about outside at home or to your friends:

- The amount of cash in the cash register
- The amount of the “night deposit” taken to the bank at store closing
- How much the business took in that day in sales
- Anything financial – what the business bought, what the business might owe another business
- The amount of inventory such as “we just got 20 brand new computers at the store”
- Anything about health – who is sick – who might have which illness
- If in a health field – who might be in for a Doctor’s appointment or was in or made an appointment for a check-up at the Hospital
- Anything you see on paper that might be confidential – salary information, criminal records anything legal from a court such as custody of children, medical information as to who is taking which medicine
- Any information that you feel should be kept private probably should be kept private
- Always ask and get permission before taking any picture of an adult required for your Career Fair assignment
- Never take photographs of anyone under the age of 16 - ever
- Never post any co-op related pictures on any form of social media