



Privacy Behind Closed Doors: Why High-Net-Worth Households Should Consider Confidentiality Agreements for Domestic Staff

In an era of social media, digital surveillance, and instant information sharing, privacy risks are no longer limited to corporate boardrooms. For high-net-worth individuals, family offices, executives, celebrities, professional athletes, and other prominent individuals, some of the most significant confidentiality risks may arise within their own homes.

Household employees often have unparalleled access to their employers' personal lives, business affairs, financial information, travel plans, and family relationships. As a result, carefully drafted non-disclosure agreements ("NDAs") and confidentiality provisions have become an increasingly important part of protecting the privacy and security of high-net-worth individuals and families.

Modern household staff frequently perform duties that give them access to highly sensitive information. Nannies, housekeepers, personal assistants, estate managers, drivers, private chefs, caregivers, security personnel, and other domestic employees may become aware of sensitive financial, personal, medical, security, travel, and family matters. Many household employers rely on informal arrangements or generic employment documents that may not adequately protect their privacy. Unlike traditional workplace confidentiality agreements, household NDAs should address the unique circumstances associated with working in a private residence.

For example, a domestic employee may routinely observe family activities, overhear personal conversations, access confidential documents, or become aware of information that would not ordinarily be available to employees in a business setting.

Key Provisions for Household Employee NDAs

Household employee NDAs should be tailored to address the unique privacy, security, and reputational concerns of private households. Agreements should clearly define confidential information, address social media and security concerns, require the return of confidential materials when employment ends, and identify the family members and related entities that are protected. Given the widespread use of social media and smartphones, employers should also consider restricting the posting or sharing of photographs, videos, recordings or comments concerning the employer, family members, residences, guests or private activities.

Enforceability Considerations

Confidentiality agreements are not absolute. Federal, state, and local laws may protect an employee's right to report suspected unlawful conduct, cooperate with government investigations, consult legal counsel, or exercise other legally protected rights. Overly broad confidentiality restrictions may be unenforceable and may undermine the effectiveness of the agreement.

New York law also limits the use of NDAs involving discrimination, harassment, and retaliation claims. These agreements must make clear that employees, prospective employees, and independent contractors remain free to speak with law enforcement, government agencies, and their lawyers. Provisions that improperly restrict these rights may be unenforceable.

Practical Takeaways

High-net-worth individuals and family offices should consider:

- Having household staff sign appropriate confidentiality agreements before they start work;
- Making sure those agreements address social media and online communications;
- Giving staff access only to sensitive information they need to do their jobs;
- Setting clear rules for protecting private and sensitive information; and
- Regularly reviewing employment documents with legal counsel.

Families employing domestic staff should avoid relying solely on standard commercial NDA templates. Household confidentiality agreements should be tailored to the particular privacy, security, and reputational concerns that arise from employment within private residences and family-office environments and should be reviewed for compliance with applicable federal, state, and local law.

As personal privacy becomes increasingly difficult to preserve, confidentiality agreements for household employees have evolved from a best practice into a necessity. A properly drafted NDA can help protect personal security, financial affairs, reputation, and confidential information while reducing the risk of unauthorized disclosure by those with the greatest access to a family's private life.

This alert is for general informational purposes only, is based on publicly available information as of October 27, 2026, and does not constitute legal advice. Developments in this matter are ongoing.

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