

## Vaughan Community Health Centre Client Consent and Release for Virtual Appointments, Online Group Programs and Email Communication During COVID-19 Pandemic

### Description:

In response to the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, VCHC is taking measures to ensure the safety of our community, clients, and staff. As such, we are able to temporarily offer the following virtual services:

- 1-on-1 telephone appointments
- Online virtual video appointments via Ontario Telehealth Network (OTN) for your 1-on-1 appointment or group appointment
- Group programs via OTN, Zoom and telephone conference sessions
- Email communication for:
  - Appointment reminders and confirmations
  - Sharing routine test results
  - Sending you forms for tests (i.e. lab requisitions, X-ray/Ultrasound requisitions)
  - Receiving photos from you for clinical care
  - Giving you educational and health promotion resources
  - Sending you links to join virtual webinar or group program
  - Inviting you to complete client experience surveys, program evaluation surveys
  - Program updates/reminders, VCHC newsletters, policies

### Limits:

**There are some limits on what can be done during a Virtual Visit and Email:**

- **Virtual visits and Email should never be used in an emergency. If you have a health emergency, you should call 9-1-1 or go to your nearest hospital emergency room or contact your healthcare provider immediately.**
- Virtual visits and Email should never be used for urgent problems (where you need a response from us in less than 72 hours). Email is not checked regularly, and we cannot guarantee any particular response time. If you have an urgent issue, you should make an appointment to see your healthcare provider.
- Virtual visits are not a substitute for meeting with your healthcare provider. Although technology is changing, the best and most confidential way to share information with your healthcare provider is in person.
- Some health concerns can be addressed with virtual care alone, but in some cases your healthcare provider may ask you to book an in-person assessment, visit a hospital, or other healthcare facility.

**Privacy:**

- We have taken reasonable steps to preserve your privacy based on this emergency situation. We cannot, however, provide you with the same guarantee of security and confidentiality as if you were seen in person.
- Some of our staff are working and providing virtual visits from home. To ensure your privacy, they will conduct the virtual visit in a quiet space away from others.

**Risks:**

- Email and Virtual Visits may not be secure. We do our best to make sure that any information you give to us during virtual visits is private and secure, but no electronic communications tools (audio, video, or Email) are ever completely secure. There is an increased security risk that your health information may be intercepted, accessed, or disclosed to third parties when using such communications tools.
- Electronic communications are subject to service disruptions beyond the control of the Vaughan Community Health Centre (VCHC) that may prevent your healthcare provider from being able to provide services. The VCHC is not responsible for information loss due to technical failures associated with your software or internet service provider.
- More than just your healthcare provider may need to read your email. Administrative staff supporting your healthcare provider and people providing coverage for your healthcare provider (like a locum doctor) may also read any email you send.
- Emails may be filed in your health record depending on the content of the email message and can become a permanent part of your health record. As part of your health record, emails may be shared within our team or third parties, with your consent or if we are permitted or required by law (including with other healthcare providers and insurance companies).
- Email is easy to forge, easy to forward (sometimes accidentally and to many people) and may exist forever.

**Conditions for using virtual visits and group programs:**

- Use a private computer/device (i.e., not an employer's or third party's computer/device), secure accounts, and a secure internet connection. For example, using a personal and encrypted email account is more secure than an unencrypted email account, and your access to the Internet on your home network will generally be more secure than an open guest Wi-Fi connection.
- Inform your provider if you are accessing a virtual appointment outside of the home address.
- It is recommended that you attend the virtual visit in a quiet space away from others. in order to protect your information and so both parties can hear each other well.

- Group Programs:
  - **Privacy:**
    - If you are attending a virtual group program, please do not share any personal health information with others as we cannot guarantee that the network is secure. If you have any concerns pertaining to your health or condition, please book a 1-on-1 follow-up appointment with your provider via OTN or telephone.
    - For your safety and security, please do not share the virtual program link or ID with others.
    - When entering the program, please use the name that was used to register for the program. Only those who have been registered will be accepted into the program.
  - **Technology:**
    - Please test the virtual platform ahead of time and login 10 minutes before the program start time.
  - **Respect & Acceptance:**
    - Be respectful of others by listening and allowing people to speak one at a time without interrupting. Participants will be placed on mute upon entry into the virtual program and will be unmuted based on the program structure.
    - Use a non-judgmental attitude and accept people's feelings and opinions.
- Please be aware emails will be sent from “**@vaughanchc.com**” email account; check your junk/spam folder if you are expecting an email from VCHC.
- Please keep emails short, if you have complex or many issues please call the office instead.
- Recording a virtual visit or group program is prohibited. We will not make a recording of any virtual visit (telephone or video), and we kindly ask that you do not record the visit either due to privacy concerns.
- Prior to providing services by the healthcare provider virtually, you and the healthcare provider will establish an emergency protocol to address the following:
  - Steps to be followed in the event of a technical issue that causes a disruption in the services that are being provided by the healthcare provider; and
  - Steps to be followed in the event of a medical emergency that occurs during the provision of services.
- You will inform the VCHC of any changes in your email address, mobile phone number, or other account information necessary to communicate electronically.
- If you no longer consent to the use of virtual visits and/or group program at the VCHC, please provide notice of the withdrawal of consent by email or other written communication.

Vaughan Community Health Centre may choose not to provide you with virtual care if you are not able to follow our virtual visit conditions. **In addition, because of the changing nature of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the use of virtual visits and email will be evaluated continually. There is no guarantee that appointment and communication by virtual visit or email will continue beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.**

**Client Agreement and Release**

I have read and fully understand this consent and release form. I understand the risks associated with using virtual visits with Vaughan Community Health Centre and I accept those risks. I understand the limits set out for using virtual visits and I agree to follow those limits.

**I agree that Vaughan Community Health Centre (which for this agreement and release includes Vaughan Community Health Centre staff, agents, directors and officers) shall not be responsible for any personal injury including death, or privacy breach (outside the control of Vaughan Community Health Centre) or other damages as a result of my choice to communicate with Vaughan Community Health Centre by virtual visits and I release and hold harmless Vaughan Community Health Centre from any liability relating to providing me care with virtual visits.**

If I had any questions about this form, I asked those questions and agree that my questions have been answered.

I understand I have the right to have legal advice about signing this form and what it means to me and have either sought that advice or have chosen not to seek such advice.

Client Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Chart #: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Substitute Decision Maker (If Applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

Provider(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_BGaffling@vaughanchc.com\_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_