



## CONSENT FOR EMAIL COMMUNICATION

### GUIDELINES:

Transmitting information by email poses several risks that clients and RCHS staff should be aware of. Clients should not agree to communicate with RCHS staff by email without understanding and accepting these risks.

### The risks of communicating by email include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Email is not a secure means of communication – the privacy and security of email communication cannot be guaranteed.
2. Employers and online services may have a legal right to inspect and keep emails that pass through their system.
3. Email is easier to falsify than handwritten or signed hard copies.
4. It is impossible to verify the true identity of the sender, or to ensure that only the recipient can read the email once it has been sent.
5. Email is often accessed on portable devices, such as smart phones, tablets and laptops, which are vulnerable to theft and loss.
6. Emails can introduce viruses into a computer system, and potentially damage or disrupt the computer.
7. Email can be forwarded, intercepted, circulated, stored or even changed without the knowledge or permission of the sender or recipient.
8. Email senders can easily misaddress an email, resulting in it being sent to many unintended and unknown recipients.
9. Email is indelible. (It cannot be erased.) Even after the sender and recipient have deleted their copies of the email, backup copies may exist on a computer or in cyberspace.
10. Use of email to discuss sensitive information can increase the risk of such information being disclosed to third parties.
11. Email can be used as evidence in court.

### Replies to Client Email:

Although RCHS will endeavour to read and respond promptly to email communication from the client, RCHS cannot guarantee that any particular communication will be read and responded to within any particular period of time. Thus, the client should not use email communication for medical/emotional emergencies or other time-sensitive matters.

### Privacy, Confidentiality and Information Security

Email communication is restricted to clients of RCHS. Please ensure that you are using the email address that has been provided by your service provider; we are not responsible for emails sent to the wrong email address. When communicating with your service provider by email, you are strongly advised to use your own personal computer and to use an email address that is password-protected and that only you can access (i.e. not at work).

**Acknowledgement and Consent**

I acknowledge and understand that:

- Email messages are not encrypted on the RCHS email system. As messages leave Rideau Community Health Services (RCHS), they are sent across the internet, where they could be intercepted and read. For this reason, RCHS cannot guarantee the security and confidentiality of e-mail messages that I send to or receive from RCHS.
- A copy of any e-mail communication related to treatment or care will be stored in my health record/ or that of the client (in case of SDM) and therefore available to the providers in my circle of care.
- I will include my name and reason for email in the subject line of the email. I will be concise and only attachments requested or expected by my provider will be sent via email (e.g. food records, BP results, blood sugar results, etc.)
- Email is used for the provision of general medical/health education, healthcare planning and follow up – email is not a replacement for regular visits with a healthcare provider. Clients are responsible for following up on anything that RCHS staff or providers have communicated, and for scheduling appointments as necessary.
- Examples of information that may be communicated via e-mail include health education, test results that reveal nothing of concern, general progress updates, and certain types of counselling.
- The client should never attempt to use email for communication regarding sensitive medical information which may include sexually transmitted infections, HIV/AIDS, mental health, substance abuse, or any other psychosocial and or medical complications. RCHS providers will not discuss such matters over email.
- Diagnoses WILL NOT be communicated via e-mail.
- Response to e-mail may be delayed.
- E-mail will NOT be used to communicate emergency or urgent health matters. If I need to discuss an urgent health matter I will phone my physician’s office, phone 9-1-1, or go to the nearest emergency department.
- E-mail communication may stop at any time at the request of either party once written notice is provided by the party requesting that email communication be stopped.

I, _____, <i>(name of client/substitute decision-maker (SDM))</i>	have discussed communicating with
_____ <i>(healthcare provider name and designation)</i>	via email about _____ <i>(myself or name of client in case of SDM)</i>

I have read the information above and consent to the conditions and responsibilities of using email.

Client/SDM Signature:	Health Services Staff Signature:
Date:	Date:
Email Address:	Email Address: