



## BCSTH PEACE Program Template: Informed Consent for Digital Support Services

During a public health crisis such as the current COVID-19 pandemic, when [public health officials recommend](#), “[social distancing](#)” to slow the spread of infection, digital technological services may be useful tools to connect remotely and provide support to program participants. Digital support services is the use of technology-based tools such as online chat and text messaging, video calls and communications, and mobile phones and mobile devices to provide support services to program participants of anti-violence programs.

### Why Informed Consent for Digital Support Services is Important

Programs incorporating digital support services must ensure that the use of the technology complies with the existing privacy laws that apply to their program. [BC’s Personal Information Protection Act](#) (PIPA) is BC’s privacy Act for the private sector and covers private businesses, charities, non-profit associations and labour organizations. PIPA:

- Governs how private sector organizations handle the personal information of its employees and the public;
- Balances an individual’s right to privacy and an organization’s need to collect, use or disclose personal information for reasonable purposes;
- Applies to more than 350,000 private sector organizations in BC;
- Uses the “reasonable person standard” in deciding whether an organization has met its statutory duty, which means that a reasonable person would think the action is appropriate under the circumstances;
- Covers not for profit organizations such as [BC Society of Transition Houses](#) (BCSTH) programs, along with unincorporated associations, trade unions and charities.

There are exceptions to this general rule where BC’s other privacy Act, the [Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#) (FIPPA), may apply to some BCSTH programs that are contracted to perform tasks for public bodies such as provincial government ministries, for example MCFD. FIPPA applies to public bodies, including to contracted service providers performing services for a public body. PIPA does not apply if FIPPA applies.

Determining whether your program is covered by FIPPA or PIPA, will depend on the wording of your contract with your funders. If the wording of the contract suggests that your records are under your program’s “custody or control”, then the PIPA rules apply. If the records are under the government ministries’ control, then FIPPA applies.

The federal law, the [Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act](#) (PIPEDA) applies to private sector entities across Canada involved in commercial activities, federally regulated organizations



and businesses, and governs the use and disclosure of personal information for these entities. For more information on privacy laws and program requirements, see the [BCSTH Legal Toolkit](#).

All of the above mentioned privacy laws are based on the same basic principles that apply to the use of digital service platforms: *accountability; identifying the purposes for the information sharing; informed consent; limiting collection and use, disclosure and retention; accuracy; privacy safeguards; transparency, and individual's access*. A [12-minute webinar](#) on the Office of the Information & Privacy Commissioner for British Columbia (OIPCBC) website is available to review these privacy principles.

Obtaining informed consent is a meaningful part of the intake process for program participants. Privacy laws require that program participants provide informed consent to the organization to allow the program to collect personal information needed to offer relevant support. If digital services are being used to provide support to program participants, in order to obtain informed consent, programs must provide participants with information about:

1. The digital tools/services that are being used to support the program participant;
2. Any digital tools/services that participants must have access to in order to connect; and,
3. Any potential risks with using the digital tools/services.

As part of the informed consent process, it may also be helpful to share information with the program participants about how to use the various digital tools/services. The BCSTH [Digital Services Toolkit](#) includes information sheets that will assist with these conversations.

The [BCSTH PEACE Program Template: Informed Consent for Digital Support Services](#) provides a template for your program to review and revise to meet your program's needs. It is an addendum to your existing informed consent forms.

When creating agency specific forms, please note:

- This template is an add-on (not a replacement) to existing informed consent forms.
- This template *does not* include key language around the collection of personal information by your program.
- The language may need to be adapted for caregivers to sign on behalf of their minor child.

Once you have decided on the digital services platform your program will use, it is recommended that you review the privacy policies of the third party vendors and determine what information should be added to your existing program's informed consent forms to comply with all relevant privacy laws.

The BCSTH Technology Safety Project includes relevant resources on our [Technology Safety Project Resource Page](#). If your program has any questions or needs further guidance on how to implement digital support services, please contact BCSTH's Technology Safety Project at [rhiannon@bcsth.ca](mailto:rhiannon@bcsth.ca)



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Please note: All phrases in orange are areas for the program to revise to reflect their program and the relevant technology.



## BCSTH PEACE Program Template: Informed Consent for Digital Support Services

### Background

During the COVID-19 outbreak when [public health officials recommend “social distancing”](#) to slow the spread of infection, <INSERT AGENCY NAME>, will be using digital services to provide PEACE Program support to women, children and youth experiencing domestic violence. Digital support services, unlike face to face counselling, use third party platforms to facilitate counselling. The digital support services are an added service and are not intended to take the place of in person services which will start as soon as the Provincial Health Office advises us it is safe to do so.

The PEACE program at <INSERT AGENCY NAME> is offering digital support services and this informed consent form covers these services. This form is an addendum to the <INSERT AGENCY NAME> informed consent form you already signed.

This form provides information to you about the third party digital service provider(s) our program is using to provide the digital support services. Your informed consent is required by the [British Columbia’s Personal Information and Privacy Act \(PIPA\)](#) before you access the PEACE Program support in person or by digital support services.

<INSERT AGENCY NAME>’s, PEACE Program complies with [BC PIPA](#) which creates and enforces rules about collecting, using and disclosing the personal information of program participants.

### Digital Support Services Technology

<INSERT AGENCY NAME> provides PEACE Program support through the following third party vendors:  
<Include all digital services offered by your program>

- Phone <insert mobile or landline device ex. Telus Mobility>
- Email <insert product or vendor name ex. Shaw Communications>
- Text Messaging <insert agency owned or employee owned device ex. Rogers Wireless>
- Real Time Web Chat <insert product name or vendor name ex. Resource Connect>
- Webcam/Video Conferencing <insert product name or vendor name and plan ex. Doxy.me>
- Apps <insert product name or vendor name ex. Whatsapp>
- Social Media <insert product name ex. Facetime>



## Program Security Measures

<INSERT AGENCY NAME> acknowledges that by communicating through third party vendor's digital platforms, there may be risks to the PEACE program participants' privacy. Any digital communication is not guaranteed to be secure or private.

<INSERT AGENCY NAME> has implemented security measures to reduce security risks including interception of information, impersonation of the program participant and breaches to privacy:

<Adapt the list below to include the security measures your agency has in place. See the list below for some examples>

### Devices:

- Laptops, computers, tablets and smartphones are owned by <INSERT AGENCY NAME> and are used for work purposes only.
- Laptops, computers, tablets and smartphones are password protected.
- Anti-virus software is installed on all of our devices
- Anti-malware software is installed on all of our devices
- PEACE Program staff are required to update regularly device software when new versions are available.
- <INSERT AGENCY NAME>'s privacy policy's require staff not to store participant names, phone numbers and emails on our devices.
- <INSERT AGENCY NAME> requires devices to be set to "not back up" conversations and contacts to cloud storage.

### Accounts:

- PEACE program staff communicate on <the third party vendor platform> through an agency account.
- Agency owned accounts are password protected.

### Third Party Vendors:

- <INSERT AGENCY NAME> has read the Privacy Policy of <the third party platform>.
- <INSERT AGENCY NAME> has selected <enter name of vendor> that incorporates end-to-end encryption of communications.

## Collection of Personal Information by Third Party Vendors

<INSERT AGENCY NAME> acknowledges that by communicating through third party vendors digital platforms, there may be risks to PEACE program participants' privacy related to the third party vendor's practices.

Some of these practices include:



<Adapt the list below to reflect the third party vendor Privacy Policy statements>

- The **third party vendor** collects personal information such as name, email address, phone number, and address when you create an account to use the platform.
- The **third party vendor** collects incidental personal information when you download the App or program version of their platform such as IP address, general location and/or device information.
- The **third party vendor** requires an email address in order for participants to begin digital service provision which is collected and stored by the third party vendor.
- The **third party vendor** collects the following personal information: <list>.
- The **third party vendor** stores the following personal information on their servers: <list>.
- The **third party vendor** has access to the following personal information: <list>.for the purpose of: <list>.
- The **third party vendor** sells, trades, shares the following personal information: <list>.
- The **third party vendor** will email you promotional material.
- By signing into the **third party vendor** with your social media or Google account, you may be granting permission for the platform to share and access your personal information.

**PEACE Program Counsellor Responsibilities:**

- While providing digital support services, the Counsellor will plan to be alone in a private room that is free from distractions or third party presence.
- The Counsellor and the <INSERT AGENCY NAME> has implemented security measures to reduce risks such as interception of information, impersonation of the program participant and breaches to your privacy.
- The Counsellor will maintain and continue to take notes of the digital support services session and will include them in the existing participant file. These notes will not be taken, uploaded or stored on the **third party vendor platform**.

**Participant's Responsibilities for Digital Support Services**

<INSERT AGENCY NAME> digital support services involve communicating with [you or your minor child] through your own mobile devices or technology and the security of your own devices is important to protecting your privacy. If you are not certain of the security of your own devices or if you suspect that your device is being monitored please advise the <INSERT AGENCY NAME> so they can support you with technology safety planning to determine if digital support services are appropriate for you.

**Informed Consent to Digital Support Services**

In addition to the informed consent form already signed and provided to <INSERT AGENCY NAME> for PEACE Program support, I have read this Informed Consent to Digital Support Services and agree that:





- I understand that <INSERT AGENCY NAME HERE> cannot guarantee that the personal information provided for the purposes of digital support services through <list third party vendor name> will not be intercepted.
- I understand that there are privacy risks (listed above) associated with engaging in PEACE Program support services through <Insert third party vendor name>
- I understand that I am responsible for the security of [my own or the devices] used for PEACE Program support services.
- I understand that the following requirements are needed in order to access PEACE Program support services through <INSERT third party vendor name and adapt to platform>:
  - Access to a mobile device
  - Internet access
  - Access to an vendor account
  - Ability to download an app if necessary
  - And any other specifications: <add third party vendor specifications>
- I understand the information obtained through the PEACE Program's digital support services may still be subject to disclosure in the following limited circumstances:
  - If PEACE Program staff have reason to believe that a child needs protection under Section 13 of the Child, Family and Community Service Act, they are obligated (as are the general public) to inform the Ministry of Children and Family Development.
  - If PEACE Program staff have reason to believe that I or my child is likely to cause serious physical harm to myself/themselves or another, they are obligated to inform the appropriate authorities.
  - If PEACE Program staff are required by court order to disclose specific records or to testify in court.
- I understand that to help maintain the privacy of PEACE Program digital support services in the remote setting, I will do my best to consider the following [for my child]:
  - The possibility of providing a private space for the remote support services. For example, headphones may be used to increase the privacy of session.
  - Using password protected online connections and Wi-Fi networks.
  - Refraining from the use of social media accounts such as Facebook, etc. to sign in to <insert name of third party vendor platform> as they may not be secure.
  - Keeping all meeting invitations, passwords, and links to access sessions secure to the best of my ability.



- I consent to having the staff from the [Agency Name]'s PEACE Program provide digital support services and in doing so to collect personally identifiable information for the purpose of services via <name third party vendor and platform> [to my minor child].

The PEACE Program digital support services at INSERT AGENCY NAME HERE is necessitated by the current COVID-19 pandemic and the BC Provincial Health Office requirements. As such, this consent form expires on this date: \_\_\_\_\_.

I understand that by signing this I am agreeing to PEACE Program digital support services through third party vendors and that I may withdraw my consent **at any time** either orally or in writing.

Program Participant's Name (print): \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian's Name (print): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent/Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Counsellor \_\_\_\_\_

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

**Reaffirmation and Extension (if additional time for digital support services is necessary)**

I confirm that this informed consent form is still valid, and I agree to extend my consent until

\_\_\_\_\_  
New Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
New Time

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Witness:** \_\_\_\_\_

If your program has any questions or needs further guidance on how to implement digital services, please contact BCSTH's Technology Safety Project at [rhannon@bcsth.ca](mailto:rhannon@bcsth.ca)

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