



## **PRIVACY POLICY & PROCEDURES**

### ***First principles***

Displayed at various locations on the premises of The Vitanova Foundation is a poster labelled “Clients’ Rights”. It leads off with the statement, “Every client of The Vitanova Foundation has the right...” and then lists ten such rights, including the right “to personal privacy, and to have information shared with staff treated as confidential, except as may be required by law, or for purposes that do not involve client-specific indicators”.

Besides clients, others who qualify as stakeholders are also entitled to their privacy, as detailed below. These stakeholders include but are not limited to:

- donors
- those who seek information about Vitanova (either in person or via its website)
- those who receive services from agencies that partner with Vitanova in the delivery of such service
- those who volunteer with Vitanova, and
- those students who are placed at Vitanova as part of their training in the field.

### **1.0 Use of Client Information**

To that end, information shared with staff by clients shall be used solely for the purposes agreed to by clients in the personal treatment plan that they---along with their primary counsellors---develop, approve, adjust as appropriate, and execute over the course of their treatment at Vitanova. The only other use of such data shall be in aggregate form and for research purposes carried out according to policy. All client-related information is stored safely---on password-protected servers or in paper files behind double-locks.

### **2.0 Information for Clients**

To ensure that clients are aware of their privacy rights and before they are admitted into Vitanova programs, they receive a copy of our Clients’ Handbook, which details our policies regarding client privacy. The following excerpts are drawn from that handbook.

- *Obtaining the consent of a client:* When you come to Vitanova, the intake worker or your primary counselor may ask you to sign consent forms that will allow your counselor to speak with people that are part of your support circle. You have the right to choose for whom you give consent. It is also your right to refuse to provide consent that would allow your primary counsellor to share your personal health information in some cases. You also have the right to revoke consent. There may be times when you are uncomfortable sharing all details to those that you have given consent for your primary counselor to contact, so you can choose to `lock` certain parts of your personal health information.
- *Responding to police request of information:* There may be a time when police request personal health information about you. In the event that a warrant or subpoena is issued

for your records, Vitanova is legally bound to provide information to the police. Vitanova may seek legal advice on this matter if there is any uncertainty about the request.

- *Preventing unauthorized access to all types of client information:* Vitanova uses closed servers and protected databases for storing client information. Vitanova also keeps all client information in double locked areas.
- *System to track clients' withdrawal of consent:* In the event that you revoke or rescind consent, your primary counselor will make a note in your record and void the consent form.
- *Notifying clients in the case of unauthorized theft, loss, access, use or disclosure of client information:* You will be notified either by mail or at your next appointment in the case of unauthorized theft, loss, access, use or disclosure of client information.
- *Accessing your file:* Clients are able to access a copy of their file for review with 30 days (or 60 days in the case of complex searches) notice. Clients can request a correction of information or obtain a copy of their record. Clients must be aware that Vitanova is unable to release any third-party information held in the file. Clients can request assistance in interpreting their record the Clinical Director of Vitanova. The contact number is 905-850-3690, extension 243, or [info@vitanova.ca](mailto:info@vitanova.ca)

Any questions regarding client information and/or privacy which are not answered to the satisfaction of a client may be referred to the Information & Privacy Commissioner of Ontario, at 416-326-3333

- *Aggregate client information*

Aggregate client information, defined as information about clients in general, or about a sub-set of clients (e.g., males between the ages of 16 and 24), can only be disclosed for the following reasons, with no reference whatsoever to specific clients

- Routine management (e.g., client satisfaction reports)
- Professional supervision (i.e., of clinical staff or placement students)
- For quality assurance purposes (e.g., in a demonstration of privacy standards as part of the accreditation process)

### **3.0 Privacy of Donors**

Vitanova shall honour donors' requests to remain anonymous in respect to:

- being publicly identified as a supporter of the organization; and/or
- having the amount of their contribution publicly disclosed.

The privacy of donors shall be respected. Any donor records that are maintained by the charity shall be kept confidential to the greatest extent possible. Donors shall have the right to see their own donor record, and to challenge its accuracy. If Vitanova exchanges,

rents, or otherwise shares its fundraising lists with other organizations, a donor's request to be excluded from the list shall be honoured.

Vitanova shall not sell its donor lists. If applicable, any rental, exchange or other sharing of the charity's donor list shall exclude the names of donors who have so requested (as provided above). If a list of the charity's donors is exchanged, rented or otherwise shared with another organization, such sharing shall be for a specified period of time and a specified purpose and must be limited to what is allowed under Federal and/or Provincial privacy legislations.

#### **4.0 Privacy of Those Who Are Not Clients**

In the event that any member of the public believes that their privacy has been breached, they should contact the Privacy Officer who is the Executive Director, at 905 850 3690, x231 or [cindy.cepparo@vitanova.ca](mailto:cindy.cepparo@vitanova.ca). To ensure clarity as to the nature of the complaint, the Privacy Officer may request details of the complaint be supplied in writing, to which the Privacy Officer will respond in writing, with an account of action(s) taken in response to the complaint. If in the view of the complainant, the response of the Privacy Officer is unsatisfactory, the complainant may appeal to the Chair of the Vitanova Foundation (905 850 3690 or [info@vitanova.ca](mailto:info@vitanova.ca)), or subsequently to the Information & Privacy Commissioner of Ontario (telephone: 416-326- 3333).

#### **5.0 Privacy of Those Who Connect with Vitanova via its Website or Electronic Communications or Telephone**

By means of its website [www.vitanova.ca](http://www.vitanova.ca) and a variety of social media platforms, The Vitanova Foundation provides information to the general public about its free programs and services. In turn, information of an aggregate nature about casual visitors to its website and viewers of its social media postings is automatically collected by such service providers, generating---in aggregate---a profile of those interested in the agency at a given period of time---their general geographic location, perhaps their age or sex. In the case of social media followers, a specific name or a fictitious "handle" might also be readily apparent. Such data is for immediate internal use only, providing a "snapshot" of those who are interested in Vitanova and is not shared with any third party, nor retained by Vitanova. More specifically:

- Types of information collected
  - Contact Information, such as name, company, title, postal code, country, work address, email address, telephone number, or other similar identifiers.
  - Biographic and Demographic Information, such as age and gender.
  - Account Information, details you choose to provide, and feedback and reviews you may provide on our services.
  - Other personal information you provide, such as the content provided either in a job application or in everyday communications with us, including interactions with us online, in-person, or on the phone.

- Automatic information collection mechanisms (e.g., cookies, log files)

Vitanova collects information and tracks user patterns anonymously on its website by using a browser feature called a “cookie”, which is able to identify a browser—but not the party using the browser—to our computers. This information is used solely to enable Vitanova to provide visitors to Vitanova’s website with a useful online experience and to identify ways to improve our site. Although cookies are widely used, it may be possible for visitors to Vitanova’s website to disable cookies via the browser settings on the visitor’s computer. However, doing so may affect the functioning of some websites. Vitanova cannot use cookies by themselves to disclose the individual identity of any site user, nor shall Vitanova ever combine information gathered by a cookie with personally identifiable information such as a visitor’s name, telephone number, or even e-mail address, without that individual’s consent.

- Purposes and uses of collecting user data

The purpose of collecting user data is to promote good communication---by understanding what information the contact is seeking, the context for such requests, and to whom the contact might be referred to both within Vitanova and without.

- Obtaining required consents (e.g., for executable programs on a users’ systems)

Consents of this sort are not sought as Vitanova does not use executable programs

- Handling, retention, and destruction of users’ information

Certain information of a clinical nature is retained as required by law (e.g., Personal Health Information Act. Similarly, certain financial information is subject to the law. Other than email addresses of those who receive Vitanova’s electronic newsletter (which can be unsubscribed at any time), Vitanova retain no user information.

## ***6.0 Mechanisms for opting-in or opting-out of receipt of electronic communications***

Any regular communication from the agency to its stakeholders (e.g., a scheduled or occasional electronic newsletter) will contain an “unsubscribe” feature within the newsletter text. Former subscribers who wish to re-subscribe should address an e-mail to that effect to [info@vitanova.ca](mailto:info@vitanova.ca)

## ***7.0 Incidents, Disruptions, Vulnerabilities***

As The Vitanova Foundation respects the privacy of our stakeholders in regards to electronic communications, the following procedures shall be observed:

- Significant incidents and/or disruptions of electronic communications shall be noted in the log used for the recording of such events, and reported to management immediately and to the board of directors annually
- Any shortcomings in overall performance (including potential vulnerabilities) shall be brought to the attention of the Information Technology Consultant at the earliest opportunity

#### **8.0 *Privacy in regards to Third Party Relationships***

From time to time, Vitanova enters into partnership with other agencies that entail the joint delivery of services. To the extent that such partnerships may involve the sharing of client information, the privacy of clients and the confidentiality of client-related information shall be protected. To that end, such information shall not be exchanged unless and until the client has given written consent to the release of such information, as specifically detailed in the consent form.

#### **9.0 *Scheduled review***

To ensure its relevance, this policy and its procedures are reviewed annually by staff