Consent & Privacy Overview

Network Consent is for the collection and sharing of personal health information. In order to build a single plan of care and take a team approach to a child's care, it is essential to obtain Network Consent so the professionals on the child's team can share clinical information, coordinate services, monitor progress and work together with the family and each other.

Network partners and professionals have a special obligation and are required by law to protect the personal health information and privacy of the children and families we serve together.

The Network's Information Sharing and Management Policy and Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) have been reviewed by:
- *Network Partner Privacy Officers*
- *Information and Privacy Commission (IPC)*
- *Regulatory Colleges for Physiotherapists, Occupational Therapists and Speech Language Pathologists*

The Network's privacy approach has been in practice since 2007.

All the information you need to obtain Network Consent from a family is contained in the "Consent & Privacy Guide for Families".

Who Obtains Network Consent?

All providers share responsibility for ensuring that knowledgeable consent is obtained from families and is properly documented in the shared electronic record. Any member of the Child and Family team can obtain consent. Here's how Network ACCESS and front line professionals can work together:

- If a family or a physician contacts the Network directly, Service Navigators at Network ACCESS will open the electronic record and obtain Network Consent, as part of the initial intake process. Consent is documented in the electronic record.
- Front-line professionals and clinicians assisting a family to make a new referral for Network services can expedite the process by walking the family through the "Consent & Privacy Guide for Families" and obtain their consent.

What You Need to Do to Obtain Network Consent:

1. Review the "Consent & Privacy Guide for Families" with the youth, family or guardian and use the "Consent for Information Sharing and Collection of Personal Information" form as a guide for obtaining Network Consent.
2. **If the child does not have an electronic record**, attach the completed Consent form to a Referral form and send them to Network ACCESS. ACCESS will open an electronic record and document consent.
3. **If a shared electronic record has already been opened** for the child, you can document verbal consent directly into the record in the Consent Form template found under the Forms Assessments/Consents tab on the client workspace. If you have a signed Consent form then upload the form into Document Manager and complete the Consent Form template in the record. For details on this process, see Consent for Information Sharing Form and Display in SharePoint.
4. If the family wishes to restrict access to the shared electronic record, or to a particular document to be filed in the record, alert the Network Helpdesk, so permissions can be changed accordingly by the System Administrator.
5. If you or the family has questions or concerns about Network Consent, please email privacy@ctn-simcoeyork.ca.

How and When Do You Update Network Consent:

During a phone or face-to-face visit, providers should review the "Consent & Privacy Guide for Families" with the family and update the existing Consent Form in the child's electronic record under the Forms Assessments/Consents tab on the client workspace.

Consent must be updated:
- Upon the family's request
- When new referrals are made
- When new team members who are not with Network partner organizations join the Child and Family team
- If there have been no changes on the team for over a year, consent should be reviewed and updated during a regularly scheduled team meeting or visit with the family.

Important Reminders

1. Consent can be written or verbal; both are equally valid as long as you ensure that the family, or a young person who is capable fully understands how and why information will be used and shared.

2. Information documented in the shared electronic record must be limited to the information needed to plan, assess, deliver and coordinate services.

3. Families have the right to withhold, withdraw or limit consent, except in specific circumstances where disclosure is legally required under the Child & Family Services Act or ordered by a court.

4. Network Consent supports information sharing with all Child and Family team members, some of whom may not be included in the list of Network partners on the Consent form. Please encourage families to add additional team members (eg. physicians and others) to the Consent.

5. Exchange of information must take place in a secure environment. Take all security and confidentiality precautions including keeping passwords confidential, conducting conversations in secure areas and using encrypted technology when transferring files and information. Email should identify clients by record number only.

Some Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why is Network Consent for Information Sharing and Collection of Personal Information needed?

The Network consists of many partners in healthcare, education, community and social services who operate under different legislation. When we work together as a Network, we are obligated to protect families and each other from inappropriate collection, use or disclosure of personal/health or confidential information. Network Consent was designed to meet all the legal requirements for Network partner staff participating in information sharing for the purposes of developing and delivering coordinated care.

2. Is Network Consent the only consent needed for information sharing?

Yes. Network Consent allows information sharing and release of information for the purposes of service planning and delivery between Network partners and other providers listed on the Consent. However, some Network partner organizations may still require their staff to have families reiterate their consent.

Additional express consent is required if information is being used for purposes other than coordinated care planning and delivery, eg. research, fundraising.

3. How do I know if Network Consent has already been obtained?

Consent status is highly visible on the client workspace on the front page of the shared electronic record. It is also important to ensure that you are listed as a member on the Child and Family Team display in the record for team communication and to demonstrate your relationship to the child and family and the reason you are accessing the record.

4. Does Network Consent include consent to share third party reports?

Yes. Relevant information received from other sources by Network partners who are participating in a Child and Family team can be included in the electronic record and shared, as long as the family/guardian has not expressly limited or refused consent for the use of the document. When in doubt, confirm with the family.

5. What kinds of limitations/restrictions might families apply to their Network Consent?

Families may limit the sharing of information by restricting access to a specific document(s) or by a specific organization(s). These limitations may require changes to the security settings of the electronic record, and must be done **via the Network Helpdesk**. Because limitations and changes to the consent can be set by the child/family at any time, team members must review the Consent Display in the shared electronic record whenever opening the child's file for any new information.

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