

## **Informed Consent for Virtual Care Groups**

For virtual groups, the Chronic Pain Centre has been approved by Alberta Health Services to use Zoom for Healthcare, which is a modern video communication platform similar to Skype or FaceTime but meets the requirements for enhanced privacy, security, and encryption.

Generally speaking, the risks and benefits of virtual groups are similar to those of in-person groups. There are, however, differences in these sessions, and potential risks may include:

### **1. Risks to Confidentiality**

- Rules of confidentiality still apply for virtual groups, and nobody will record the session.
- Because virtual care sessions take place outside of the Chronic Pain Centre, there is potential for other people to overhear sessions if you are not in a private place during the session.
- To reduce risks, your group leader will take all reasonable steps to ensure your privacy.
- Please make sure you find a private place for sessions where other people are not present, where others cannot overhear the conversation, and where you will not be interrupted.
- It is also important for you to protect the privacy of the group's Zoom Meeting ID and Password.
- If confidentiality is compromised (e.g. someone is looking over your shoulder at the screen), you will be asked to manage the situation or be removed from the session.

### **2. Technology Limitations**

- Although we use a secure videoconferencing platform, there is no way to guarantee that this software is completely failure-proof (e.g., time delays, equipment failure, poor internet speeds).
- As with any technology, there is a chance of a security breach that could affect the privacy of person and/or medical information. Virtual groups require increased effort to protect client information (e.g., verifying identification).

### **3. Therapeutic Limitations & Alternatives:**

- Due to the nature of the interaction, there may be quality differences that are experienced when compared to face-to-face services. For example, there may be a delay in visual or audio messaging. Such differences have potential to lead to miscommunications between group members and the group leader. Being open about such concerns will be helpful to ensure such barriers do not impact the therapeutic alliance or your care.
- Virtual care isn't for everyone. The group leader may withdraw a person from the group, or a group member may withdraw themselves. As an alternative to virtual care, group members can wait for in-person groups to resume.