



# Code of Ethics

## Table of content

<b>Board of Directors Statement of Commitment</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Foreword: A word from the President and CEO</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>1. PATIENT RIGHTS</b> .....	<b>7</b>
1.1 Right to care and services .....	7
1.2 Right to dignity, kindness and benevolence .....	7
1.3 Right to autonomy .....	7
1.4 Right to equity .....	7
1.5 Right to information for your consent to care and services .....	8
1.6 Right of your loved ones to participate in your care .....	8
1.7 Right to respect for your privacy .....	8
<b>2. PATIENT'S RESPONSIBILITY</b> .....	<b>9</b>
2.1 Partnership and collaboration .....	9
2.2 Interpersonal relationships .....	9
2.3 Respect for property .....	9
2.4 Consent .....	10
2.5 Directives in the event of incapacity .....	10

<b>3. RESPONSIBILITIES OF CARE PROVIDERS</b> .....	<b>11</b>
3.1 Quality health care and services .....	11
3.2 Respect for dignity .....	11
3.3 Respect for equity .....	11
3.4 Respect for privacy .....	12
3.5 Respect for the right to information .....	12
3.6 Respect for privacy .....	12
3.7 Consent and refusal .....	13
<b>4. OTHER INFORMATION</b> .....	<b>14</b>
4.1 Teaching mission .....	14
4.2 Research mission .....	14
4.3 Request for consultation in clinical ethics .....	15
4.4 Questions or concerns .....	15
4.5 Conclusion .....	16
<b>GLOSSARY</b> .....	<b>17</b>

The Code of Ethics has been approved by Administration Board of Vitalité Health Network on October 8, 2019.

## Acknowledgements

Thank you to the members of the Clinical Ethics Board for their contribution to the initial revision of Vitalité Health Network's Code of Ethics. Also, a very special thanks to the members of the Patient and Family Advisory Committee for their feedback on and involvement in implementing the new Code of Ethics in 2019.

## Board of Directors Statement of Commitment



**Thomas Soucy**  
Chairperson of the Board of Directors

On behalf of the Vitalité Health Network Board of Directors, I am proud to attest to our full adherence to the organization's code of ethics. We firmly believe that respect for the rights and responsibilities of our patients, staff, physicians and volunteers is essential to provide quality care and services. Our code of ethics guides the organizational culture in our daily activities at Vitalité Health Network. It was designed by making our patients our central focus. This is why we firmly support the application of this code of ethics and we expect every member of our team to adhere to it with professionalism and integrity. We encourage you to do the same, to benefit us all.

## Message from the President and CEO



**Dr. France Desrosiers**  
President and CEO

This code of ethics is the cornerstone of our commitment towards you. It reflects our dedication towards patients and families as well as our respect for the rights and responsibilities we share. As a member of our great team, I am committed to applying the principles outlined in our code of ethics with professionalism and integrity. We must all work together to create an environment of collaboration and trust where patients can receive quality care safely; I'm counting on you to ensure this. I am proud of our organization and the commitment we all have towards patients and families. Thank you for your dedication to our mission and for respecting our code of ethics.

## Introduction

This Code of Ethics defines patient rights and responsibilities. It also defines the responsibilities of staff, medical professionals and volunteers who undertake to respect the values, principles and rules set out in this code.

These values are anchored in our organizational culture. They support and guide the conduct, practices and daily actions of our staff, medical professionals and volunteers. Vitalité Health Network's values are as follows:

- **Safety and respect above all:** We treat our co-workers, community members, patients and their families with respect, dignity, sensitivity and compassion. We provide a health care and work environment that is caring, safe and respectful of differences.
- **Humility and curiosity at the heart of a learning culture:** We are curious, humble and open-minded in the face of challenges and setbacks, thereby fostering learning and growth. Everyone's creativity, energy and innovative spirit support the continuous improvement of our care and services.
- **Collaboration and mutual support that promote synergy:** We seek and value the ideas and contributions of everyone in achieving common goals. Mutual support and synergy within teams foster a sense of belonging and empower individuals and teams.
- **Integrity and accountability in all our actions:** We provide care and services that meet the highest quality standards. We act ethically, honestly and responsibly and we keep our promises and commitments.

The basic principles of ethics shape our culture and strengthen our reputation and must be recognized by the Network's staff, medical professionals and volunteers. The principles endorsed by Vitalité Health Network are as follows: human dignity, autonomy, kindness, benevolence, equity and respect for interpersonal relationships.

## 1. PATIENT RIGHTS

Vitalité Health Network recognizes your rights and ensures that they are respected by the staff, medical professionals and volunteers.

### 1.1. Right to care and services

We will offer you quality health care and services in the official language of your choice.

We will inform you on the care and services available, where to obtain them, how to access them, and the expected wait time.

### 1.2. Right to dignity, kindness and benevolence

We will treat you with respect, courtesy, understanding and compassion. We will respect your dignity and needs while providing you with a safe care environment.

We recognize your need to be surrounded and supported by your loved ones and family caregivers.

When you are vulnerable, we commit to being even more attentive to your needs.

### 1.3. Right to autonomy

We respect your autonomy and your knowledge of your health condition and we acknowledge you as a partner in care. From this stems the importance of your participation in the care and services provided to you.

If your condition does not allow you to make decisions, a designated person, decision-maker or next of kin can do so on your behalf, respecting your advance medical directives and your best interests.

### 1.4. Right to equity

We will offer you the most appropriate care and services to meet your needs, taking into account your personal characteristics and your preferences.

### 1.5. Right to information for your consent to care and services

We will give you all the information required so you can consent to your care and services, especially the alternatives and the potential consequences of refusal. When possible, we will provide you with this information in writing so that you can refer to it. We will ensure that you understand the information provided, so that you may give your free and informed consent, without obligation.

We want you to participate in the decisions about your care and services. In the event you refuse care or services, we will respect your choice while trying to understand your reasoning and ensuring that we meet the needs you have expressed.

### 1.6. Rights of your loved ones to participate in your care

We will respect your decision for a person of your choice to accompany you when you receive information or begin the process of receiving care or services.

We acknowledge your loved ones as partners in care. The involvement of your loved ones in your decisions about your treatments and in your follow-up is important for your overall wellness. However, we will respect your preference regarding their level of participation.

### 1.7. Right to respect of your privacy

We will respect your privacy and treat your information confidentially, in accordance with legal limitations. Therefore, your information, including the fact that you are here and the reason for your visit, is confidential information that is shared only with the people you have authorized to access it and the people who are providing care and services to you.

## 2. PATIENT'S RESPONSIBILITY

You have responsibilities to fulfil so that we can provide you with the best care and services.

### 2.1. Partnership and collaboration

You are a partner in your care and services. You will participate actively with staff, medical professionals and students to assess and improve your health within a climate of trust. You will share information on your health (illnesses, hospitalizations, medications, etc.) that can help us determine the care and services you need.

You will participate in the care and services offered to you by talking openly about yourself, your life experience and your needs, while participating in your treatment plan.

You will follow the directives received about the various aspects of your care.

You will report to your appointments on time and notify us in the event of absence.

### 2.2. Interpersonal relationships

You will be polite and understanding toward other patients, staff, medical professionals, students and volunteers by adopting respectful, non-threatening behaviour toward them.

### 2.3. Respect for property

You will show respect for the facility's property, ensuring that equipment is kept intact and in good condition and that the premises are kept safe.

You will also respect others' property.



## 2.4. Consent

Informed consent requires a communication process between you or your substitute decision-maker and a member of the health care team. Following this discussion, you will be in a position to accept or refuse a given intervention or procedure. Consent is informed if, before accepting treatment, you have received the information required to make an informed decision and you have received responses to your requests for additional information about treatment.

In the event you change your mind or decide to refuse care, services or treatment, please inform us.

## 2.5. Directives in the event of incapacity

You will discuss with your physician, care team, family and loved ones your wishes with respect to the care and services that you wish to receive in the event you could no longer make decisions yourself.

You will provide us with a copy of your health care directives (living will) as well as a copy of your power of attorney for personal care so that we can respect them.

At the end of life, we will respect your dignity by supporting you in this phase of your life.



## 3. RESPONSIBILITIES OF CARE PROVIDERS

Vitalité Health Network's care providers have responsibilities to fulfil to provide you with the best care and services.

### 3.1. Quality health care and services

We will keep our competencies current to provide you with quality health services in a safe environment in the official language of your choice.

We will work as a team and establish partnerships to ensure that your care and services are well coordinated.

### 3.2. Respect for dignity

We will treat you with kindness and refrain from any abuse or degrading attitudes. No form of intimidation, harassment or violence toward you will be tolerated.

We will identify ourselves and explain the reasons for our intervention when we offer you care and services.

We will address you respectfully and call you by your last name unless you instruct us otherwise.

We will be polite and understanding by, among other things, including you in conversations and listening to you. Therefore, we encourage you to express your needs and expectations. In this way, we hope to build a relationship of trust with you.

### 3.3. Respect for equity

We will treat you equitably, taking into account your needs, your personal characteristics and when possible your preferences.

Therefore, we will refrain from any form of discrimination against you, especially with respect to your national or ethnic origin, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age or your mental or physical disabilities.

### 3.4. Respect for privacy

All information about you is confidential.

All relevant information about you is accessible only by the staff, medical professionals and students who are providing care and services to you. We are not authorized to disclose your information or communicate its content to others unless we have received your implied or written consent or unless authorized by law.

We will show discretion at all times by not discussing your health condition or social status, your reactions, or your care, service or treatment plan in public places.

### 3.5. Respect for the right to information

We recognize your right to participate in any decisions affecting your state of health as well as the planning of your care and services. We will be attentive to your needs and concerns and will inform you about your health condition and the care and services you are receiving.

We will ensure that you understand the information that we provide to you and respond to any requests you make for information.

At your request, we will facilitate access to your clinical record as per the *Personal Health Information Privacy and Access Act*.

### 3.6. Respect for privacy

Respect for your privacy is a priority. When the door of your room or of an examination or treatment room is closed or the curtain around your bed is drawn, we will knock at the door or make our presence known and then wait for your permission or pause before entering.

We will also be discreet and sensitive when we provide care and services to you.

We will stay out of private conversations between you and your loved ones and family caregivers.

### 3.7. Consent and refusal

Obtaining your informed consent is not simply your signature on a form.

We commit to providing you with all the information on your health condition and on the care, services and treatment that we suggest so that you can consent to or refuse them. We commit to responding to your questions if you do not understand.

We will inform you of the availability of resources and alternatives to help you make an informed decision.

In the event you change your mind or decide to refuse care, services or treatment, we will respect your decision.

If you are unable to consent to care or services, we will provide your decision-maker or next of kin with the information required so they can consent or refuse on your behalf in your best interests.



## 4. OTHER INFORMATION

### 4.1. Teaching mission

As part of our teaching mission, we host students. These people, under the supervision and authority of professionals, provide care and services according to their level of training. These students contribute to the quality of care and services while preparing to become the next generation of health care providers.

### 4.2. Research mission

Our Network has a research mission that contributes to the advancement of science and helps improve the quality of care and services.

Researchers' projects are evaluated by the Research Ethics Board before being authorized. You may be approached by a researcher or member of the care team to participate in a study. You will then receive the information required to decide whether or not to consent to participating. We would like to assure you that refusing to participate will not affect the quality of care and services that you receive.

### 4.3. Request for consultation in clinical ethics

A consultation service in clinical ethics is available on request to inform you or assist you when you have a difficult decision to make. If you need such a service, please discuss it with a member of your care team, who will provide you with the information necessary to access this service.

You may also communicate directly with the Regional Ethics Office as follows:

- In writing: **Regional Ethics Office**  
Vitalité Health Network, 275 Main Street, Suite 600, Bathurst, NB E2A 1A9
- By e-mail: [ethique.ethics@vitalitenb.ca](mailto:ethique.ethics@vitalitenb.ca)
- By telephone: 506-229-3964

### 4.4. Questions or concerns

The Network is committed to providing you with quality care and services to meet your needs and those of your family. Your feedback on your care experience is important to us and helps us improve the quality of care and services that we provide to you.

If you have questions or concerns about the care or services you received or are receiving or regarding your rights and responsibilities, please let us know. We will suggest first discussing the matter with a member of your care team, including the unit manager.

If you do not obtain a satisfactory response to your questions or concerns or if you would like to file a complaint, please contact the Patient Experience Department for your area:

- Toll-free number: 1-877-286-1311



You may also use one of the following channels:

- In writing: **Patient Experience Department**  
Vitalité Health Network, 275 Main Street, Suite 600, Bathurst, NB. E2A 1A9
- By e-mail: [qualite.quality@vitalitenb.ca](mailto:qualite.quality@vitalitenb.ca)

#### 4.5. Conclusion

In closing, we would like to reiterate the importance of patient and family participation in care.

We hope that the principles and values stated in this document are a source of inspiration and motivation for patients. We strive to provide quality health care and services that meet patients' needs.



## GLOSSARY

**Autonomy:** Means a person's independence. A patient's autonomy includes their ability to think, decide, act freely and consent to their care and treatments. The patient is the master of their own body and may refuse or accept any intervention suggested. As a moral standard, autonomy corresponds to the respect of another person's right to adopt a line of conduct that is different from their own.

**Benevolence:** Benevolence is kindness in action. It is the quality of having others benefit from kindness. Benevolence also expresses the desire for the decisions made to be in the best interests of the patient.

**Kindness:** Kindness is concern for another. It suggests focusing on what for another is considered good, without this good necessarily coinciding with our personal well-being. It is the patient's wellness that motivates our kind behaviours toward them, as well as between us, the Network's employees, care staff members and physicians.

**Human dignity:** Means the right of a person to be respected regardless of their differences.

**Advance directives:** Document in which a patient stipulates their wishes about their health care and future personal care and appoints a decision-maker to make decisions on their behalf when they are no longer able.

**Equity:** All people are equal and must receive the same treatment opportunities. However, in some circumstances, to be equitable, people need to be treated differently so that they receive the same chances and opportunities.

**Privacy:** Quality of being personal, what belongs to a person's private life.

**Substitute decision-maker:** Person appointed to give, refuse or suspend their consent regarding the personal care of an incapacitated person. This person is appointed in a power of attorney for personal care, appointed by a competent court, or appointed by the patient in their advance directive when they are competent or is the patient's next of kin.

• **Care partner:** A loved one or a substitute decision-maker that the patient wants to include in their health care, including a member of their immediate or extended family, a friend, a caregiver, etc.

**Respect for interpersonal relationships:** The involvement of loved ones in the decisions related to treatments to be provided and in follow-up is important for people's overall wellness. Insofar as possible, interpersonal relationships must be respected while factoring in the concerns of loved ones.

**Quality care:** Quality is the degree of excellence or the extent to which an organization meets clients needs and exceeds their expectations (Accreditation Canada). Quality care is comprised of several factors including accessibility, safety, consistency, efficiency and relevance.



