



Show you **C·A·R·E**, take these steps before you share:
2 - How do I “Assess Circumstances”?

Q: What does “Assess Circumstances” mean?

A: Assessing Circumstances means always asking *before* you share: “Does the person I am sharing the information with have the **authority** to receive that information?” If the answer is no, then you may not be authorized to share that information with the person without further approval.

Q: How is someone “Authorized” to receive confidential information?

A: The person receiving the identified information must have permission to have it, which is typically obtained in one or more of the following ways:

- As set out in or required by **legislation** including the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FIPPA), the *Mental Health Act*, and so on);
- As necessary and directly related to provide **direct health care** or **support of care** services to persons (e.g., sharing limited and necessary information with a patient’s family physician; sharing day care licensing infractions with the public);
- When a patient or person **consents** to release specific information for a stated purpose (e.g., to participate in an approved research clinical trial).

Q: What are some examples of authorization?

A: Here are a few typical situations:

1. Kim, a dietitian at Island Health, requests allergy information about a patient in order to provide care. Kim has the authority to receive the information because it is necessary to fulfill her job duties within Island Health and provide care to her patient.
2. A family physician requests the results of the latest diagnostic image on her patient, who is a resident at an Island Health residential care facility. You are authorized to share it after confirming that this is in fact the resident’s most responsible physician and therefore that physician also has the authority to obtain this information.
3. A law enforcement officer is requesting information about the medical condition of a patient in Island Health’s emergency department. This information can only be shared after confirming that the officer has been authorized by law (e.g., has a court order) or as described in Island Health Policy (e.g., [Policy 1.5.3 – Release of Patient Information to a Law Enforcement Personnel in Urgent or Emergency Situations](#), [Policy 1.5.5 – Gunshot and Stab Wound Reporting](#)) to obtain that information.

Remember: “Assessing Circumstances” means ensuring you share confidential information only with those who are authorized to receive it.

If in doubt, **CHECK IT OUT:** privacy@viha.ca

Caring for information is caring for people
Respect privacy – Protect personal information

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