

**Informed Consent for Virtual Groups**

House of Ruth Maryland’s Abuse Intervention Services

*There is specific confidentiality and informed consent information you need to know while we move to virtual groups. Please note that, in addition to this informed consent, your original, previously signed confidentiality waiver will remain in effect during online group sessions.*

**Overview**

❖ "Virtual groups” refer to online abuse intervention services. These services are being held in separate locations, and delivered electronically.

❖ You will need access to certain online services and tools to engage in virtual group sessions, all of which are outlined below.

❖ Virtual groups have both benefits and risks, which are outlined below.

❖ It is possible that attending virtual groups may not be appropriate for you. If this happens, you will be expected to complete your group sessions in-person, when they resume.

❖ You can choose to stop attending virtual groups at any time. If you choose this, you will be expected to complete your group sessions in-person, when they resume.

❖ You will need to create an appropriate space for your virtual group sessions. This may look like setting aside a physical space to attend your group, as well as having private access to your phone, computer, and headphones during your group time.

❖ You will need to make a plan for managing technology failures and barriers. If you need support or assistance please contact your facilitator by phone or email before or after group sessions.

❖ House of Ruth Maryland’s intervention services follows security best practices and legal standards in order to protect your personal information, but you will also need to participate in maintaining your own security and privacy.

**HRM’s intervention services provide virtual groups using the following tools:**

* *GoToMeeting*
* *Telephone*
* *DocuSign for consent forms*
* *Email for setting up group sessions, not for services*

➢ You will need access to Internet service/Wi-Fi, as well as a computer or tablet with camera and microphone capabilities, or a smartphone.

➢ You will need access to headphones with microphone capabilities to maintain confidentiality of other group members.

➢ If you have any questions or concerns about the above tools, please address them directly to your facilitators so you can discuss their risks, benefits, and specific application to you.

**What are the Benefits and Risks of Virtual Groups?**

Attending virtual groups allows you to:

* Receive services at times or in places where the service may not otherwise be available.

Attending virtual groups has the following risks:

* Services can be impacted by technical failures, which may introduce risks to your privacy.

For example,

* Internet connections could stop working or become too unstable to use during your virtual group sessions
* Non-approved people (hackers) may have access to your private information. House of Ruth Maryland has taken every precaution to ensure this does not happen, but it is still a possibility.
* Computers or smartphones can have sudden failures, or local power services can go out.
* There may be additional benefits and risks to attending virtual groups that are not within our control.

**Will Virtual Groups Work for Me?**

Virtual groups may not be a good fit for every person. Please talk to your facilitators if you find virtual groups so difficult to use that it distracts from the services being provided, or if there are any other reasons why attending groups online is difficult for you. We want to work with you to provide the best service at this time. You also have a right to stop attending virtual groups at any time. If you choose to stop attending virtual groups, you will be expected to complete your group sessions in-person, when that resumes.

**Your Virtual Group Experience**

* You will be responsible for creating a safe and confidential space during sessions.
* You should use a space that is free of other people. It should also be difficult or impossible for people outside the space to see or hear your interactions with your group during the session. If you are unsure of how to do this, please ask your

facilitators for assistance.

**Recordings & Confidentiality**

You will not record any group sessions. If you are caught recording, you will automatically be terminated from the program.

I confirm that I have read and understand the Virtual Groups Consent policies, and agree to these terms. I understand that if I do not agree to these terms, I will not be able to participate in virtual groups.

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Client’s name

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Client’s Signature Date

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Staff Signature Date