



About Breaking Glass in VITLAccess For VITLAccess Local Security Officers and VITLAccess Users

Summary: What is Breaking Glass? When may it be used?

When an individual opts-out of sharing their health information on the Vermont Health Information Exchange, that data remains in the Exchange but is hidden. In the event of a Medical Emergency certain VITLAccess users can “break glass” and access the record of an opted-out individual as part of initiating emergency medical care.

The following information is intended to help VITLAccess Local Security Officers and VITLAccess users understand how breaking glass works, when breaking glass is permitted, and what an organization’s responsibilities are for reviewing break glass events and notifying patients.



Frequently Asked Questions about Breaking Glass in VITLAccess

What does it mean to be opted-out of data sharing?

Individuals can choose to limit access to their health information in the Vermont Health Information Exchange. This is called “opting out.” It does not remove information from the Vermont Health Information Exchange but does block that information from being accessed for most purposes. Individuals can learn more and opt-out of sharing at vitl.net/sharing or by calling VITL at 802-861-1800. VITL asks participating health care organizations to help educate their patients about their options and offers a [toolkit of patient education resources](#) to support this.

How does a VITLAccess user break glass to access the record of an opted-out Individual?

When a VITLAccess user with a “Clinical with Break Glass” role clicks to open the record of an opted-out individual, they will see the pop-up box below. To enter the patient chart, they click the blue button attesting that the access is for a Medical Emergency.

 **Restricted information, access only in a medical emergency** 

You are trying to access information about a patient who has opted-out of having their health information viewed through the Vermont Health Information Exchange.

A user may access an opted-out patient’s protected health information (PHI) for use in treatment for a medical emergency, but only if they are unable to obtain patient consent for such access.

Access of an opted-out patient record in a medical emergency is called a “break glass” event. The user’s organization must notify the patient as soon as is reasonably possible following a break glass event. VITL logs all break glass events and contacts the Local Security Officer at the user’s organization to review the reason and confirm that the patient has been notified of the emergency access.



What is the definition of Medical Emergency?

Medical Emergency is defined in the Protocols for Access to Protected Health Information on VHIE (available on the [Policies page of vitl.net](https://vitl.net/policies)) as follows: "Medical Emergency" means a condition that poses an immediate threat to the health of any individual and which requires immediate medical intervention. The term "Medical Emergency" specifically is intended to include an "Emergency Medical Condition" which is defined as a medical condition manifesting itself by acute symptoms of sufficient severity such that the absence of medical attention could reasonably be expected to result in (1) placing the health of the individual in serious jeopardy or (2) serious impairment to bodily functions or (3) serious dysfunction of any bodily organ or part.

What VITLAccess users have the ability to break glass?

Beginning in January 2024, only VITLAccess users with the VITLAccess role assignment "Clinical with Break Glass" can break glass. No other user roles can break glass.

Who should have a VITLAccess user role with break glass functionality?

The VITLAccess Local Security Officer is responsible for determining the correct role for each VITLAccess user at their organization. If the user's job at the organization involves providing care for individuals experiencing Medical Emergencies, the Clinical with Break Glass role may be appropriate. If the user's job does not involve providing or supporting care for individuals experiencing Medical Emergencies, they should be assigned one of the roles without break glass functionality.

What is the responsibility of a health care organization if one of their providers or staff breaks glass?

The VITL team will inform the VITLAccess Local Security Officer about any break glass events that occur at their organization. The notification includes PHI (the individual's name and date of birth) and therefore will be made through the MyVITL Support ticketing system.

- The VITLAccess Local Security Officer is responsible for reviewing the event and reporting back to VITL with the reason for access.
- The VITLAccess Local Security Officer is responsible for ensuring the Individual whose chart was accessed is notified of that access as soon as reasonably possible. This notification is required by State and VITL policy (see the Protocols for Access to Protected Health Information on VHIE (available on the [Policies page of vitl.net](https://vitl.net/policies))). VITL can provide sample text for this notification.

For more information:
vhiesupport@vitl.net
or 802-861-1800 Monday-Friday, 9-5