

primary care networks work **4** u + your **patients**



What is a Primary Care Network?

Primary Care Networks are a made-in-Alberta approach to improve access to, and better co-ordinate primary health care for, Albertans province-wide.

In a Primary Care Network, a team of health professionals led by family physicians delivers and co-ordinates health services, resulting in better collaboration, more timely referrals and more comprehensive care. A Network can be comprised of one clinic with many family physicians and other health professionals (e.g. nurse practitioners, dietitians, pharmacists, social workers and mental health professionals), or many family physicians and health professionals in several clinics in a geographic area.

Each Network has the flexibility to develop programs and provide services in a way that works locally to meet the specific health needs of patients. Networks are established within the framework set by Alberta Health and Wellness (AHW), Alberta Medical Association (AMA) and Alberta Health Services (AHS).

“You get the patient contact, have the time to have the patient contact and get to work as part of the team in determining the best course of care for the patient. It really is a dream job.”

Tara Grimstead, pharmacy lead, WestView Primary Care Network.

Is working in a Primary Care Network right for me?

There are several benefits to being part of a Primary Care Network.

Recognition of your role as a health professional

As a member of a Primary Care Network, your area of specialty will receive increased recognition, as well as your role in overall patient care. You will develop peer-to-peer relationships with family physicians and other health professionals that will value the specialized health services you offer as part of the overall health management of patients.

Increased job satisfaction

Through the collaboration of a Primary Care Network, you will achieve increased job satisfaction and professional stimulation with the opportunity to focus on further applying your skills.

The multi-disciplinary team environment promotes continuous improvement and best practices so you can be confident that your patients receive the best care possible.

Empowerment

Because your Network serves the specific patient population in your geographic area, the team has the flexibility to identify local health issues and develop local solutions. By increasing emphasis on health promotion and disease management and prevention, you and your Network can be proactive in improving the health of your overall patient population.

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The collaborative environment of a Primary Care Network encourages input from all team members to define its unique approach and focus. Your area of specialty is valued in developing innovative programs and services for your patients.

Increased support

A Primary Care Network can support you in several ways. Your Network team shares responsibility for patient care thereby increasing patients' access to various areas of speciality. This creates a higher level of efficiency in managing patient care, enabling the Network team to care for more patients and provide more comprehensive care.

The goals of the Primary Care Initiative, through Primary Care Networks, are to:

- Co-ordinate management of access to appropriate primary care, 24/7.
- Increase the number of Albertans with ready access to primary care.
- Co-ordinate and integrate your practice with other health services including secondary, tertiary and long-term care through specialty-care linkages to primary care.
- Increase emphasis on health promotion, thus strengthening support for medically-complex patients and chronic diseases, and disease and injury prevention.
- Facilitate greater use of multi-disciplinary teams to provide comprehensive primary care.

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Quick Facts about Primary Care Networks

- *Primary Care Networks are a result of a joint initiative between Alberta Health and Wellness, Alberta Medical Association and Alberta Health Services.*
- *The first Primary Care Network was launched in 2005. As of July 2010 there are 35 Networks, involving over 2000 family doctors, hundreds of health professionals (i.e. nurses, dietitians, pharmacists, social workers, mental health specialists, and many others) serving more than 2.3 million Albertans.*
- *Eight more Primary Care Networks are in the planning stages.*

Frequently asked questions

With so many changes to the health care system over the past 15 years, how do I know the Primary Care Network model will be long term?

There are many Primary Care Network success stories! This innovative approach to delivering primary care, along with other initiatives introduced by the Alberta Government over the last decade, is part of a long-term strategy to ensure all Albertans have access to family physicians and other health care professionals when they need it.

Will I have to work longer hours?

No. A benefit of a Primary Care Network is sharing patient responsibility among a group of health professionals. The support achieved by the Network's multi-disciplinary team will help you find the right balance.

How does a Primary Care Network determine which health professionals it needs?

A Network identifies its priority health issues based on local needs and assembles a team of health professionals to best meet those needs. For example, a community with a large number of young families would require health professionals to support family planning, obstetrical services and child health care.

“Having Lisa (a social worker) on the ground and in the community has made such a huge difference for so many patients. It is extremely rewarding, and demonstrates clearly a huge benefit to having a Primary Care Network in the region.”

Dr. Peter V. Davis, Wolf Creek Primary Care Network.

All Primary Care Networks will provide some or all of the following services:

- Basic ambulatory care and follow-up
- Care of complex problems and follow-up
- Psychological counselling
- Screening and chronic disease prevention (heart disease, diabetes, etc.)
- Family planning and pregnancy counselling
- Child health care
- Obstetrical care
- Palliative care
- Geriatric care
- Care of chronically ill patients
- Minor surgery
- Minor emergency care
- Primary inpatient care at hospitals and long-term care facilities
- Rehabilitative care
- Information management
- Population health
- Management of access to appropriate primary care, 24/7
- Access to laboratory and diagnostic imaging
- Co-ordination of home care, emergency room service, long-term care, secondary care and public health
- Assisting patients, without a family physician, to become attached to one and receive care

I have more questions. Who can I talk to?

If you have additional questions about joining a Primary Care Network, contact the PCI Program Management Office. It can put you in touch with peers working in a Primary Care Network so that you can get their perspective based on their experience.

Toll free: 1-866-714-5724

Edmonton: 780-488-4350

Or visit albertapci.ca.