Introducing: Central Okanagan
Primary Care Networks

What is the purpose?

To develop a network of providers who work together to deliver medical care and support for patients beyond what the typical primary care office can offer. Each network will allow family doctors, other primary care providers, and their patients to better access supportive clinical services from known and trusted team members; these teams will share patient care responsibilities.

The goal of each Primary Care Network (PCN) is to strengthen and support primary healthcare so that everyone in our region can access the care they need. Patients and families receive clinic, community, and Interior Health-based services in supportive, trusting, and safe environments.

An overarching goal of the PCN is for team members to know one another, and for each PCN to expand to offer services that best support the patients in the specific PCN community.

Why now?

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, development of PCNs in British Columbia was a Ministry of Health priority. There are tens of thousands of Central Okanagan residents without a primary care provider, and this lack of primary care adversely affects heath outcomes. At the same time, primary care providers are working at maximum capacity and burnout is a constant threat, with the COVID-19 pandemic adding further stress. These changes are needed now more than ever.

How does this differ from past initiatives that had similar goals?

The PCN is a true collaboration directed by the Ministry of Health and developed by the Central Okanagan Division of Family Practice, local Indigenous partners, and Interior Health Authority. Planning, oversight and management of the PCN occurs at a collaborative table, with other community partners participating. Lessons learned from prior initiatives have been taken into account when developing these new PCNs. It is recognized that primary care providers cannot take care of more patients until there is more support for existing patients, and that the supports needed vary from one patient, one clinic, and one community to the next.

What will this look like?

The Central Okanagan will have three PCNs – West Kelowna, Central Kelowna, and Rutland/Lake Country. Each PCN will have a dedicated team of nurses, pharmacists, social workers, and other allied health professionals. Services will be offered via virtual care, in clinics, and in PCN "hubs." Each clinic in a PCN can work with a Nurse Coordinator to support the clinic and connect patients to other providers in the PCN. The Nurse Coordinator will be co-located at the clinic and can work virtually.

The PCN teams will be patient-focused, coordinated teams, and will grow to meet the specific needs of the community. Thus, each PCN can evolve to include different team members. New primary care teams will provide the full scope of primary care services through the PCN and all clinical teams will engage in evaluation and quality improvement (QI) cycles.

What are the expected outcomes?

- Enable patients to improve their experience and health outcomes through a team-based approach to care,
- Increase access to primary care through the addition of team-based care, thus, improving health equity in our community,
- Provide care that is coordinated, comprehensive, culturally safe and appropriate,
- Reduce acute care utilization,
- Achieve the Quadruple Aim: improved population health, enhanced experience of care for individuals, reduced cost, and increased provider satisfaction and joy in work.

What's My Role?

"We are building the plane in the air." The benefit of this approach is that *we are all* the architects of our own PCN. The challenge is that there are many questions for which answers are emergent, and this will continue to be the case for some time.

As with any large-scale transformational change, frustrations are bound to part of the process. We are committed to working together as a team to address issues and they arise, and work with you to create the best experience for your clinic, your team and ultimately your patients.