

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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Health Connect Registry – For primary care network administrators and care providers

March 17, 2021

Key Messages:

- The Health Connect Registry is a simple, easy-to-use online form for British Columbians in communities where a primary care network (PCN) has launched. It offers patients the opportunity to register for a regular primary care provider – either a family doctor or a nurse practitioner located in their home community.
- The Ministry of Health is taking a phased, soft-launch approach to the registry for PCN communities.
 - A soft launch of the Health Connect Registry will ensure that 8-1-1 call navigators and PCNs can effectively manage patient registration.
 - At first, only Health Connect Registry staff and individuals in a PCN with a responsibility for facilitating attachment of patients from the registry will have access to the registry.
 - In early 2021, the public online form went live and is now being shared with PCNs who have launched the registry.
 - PCNs are then be able to share the link – HealthLinkBC.ca/health-connect-registry – with patients in their communities and patients will be able to register themselves, their family or anyone in their care.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

FOR INTERNAL USE – NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

- PCN communities that are soft launching the Health Connect Registry are to hold on broad advertising plans. Rather, PCNs are encouraged to reach out to patients and providers on existing waitlists in their communities to inform them of and register them in the Health Connect Registry.
- Only communities where a PCN has launched can participate in the Health Connect Registry and you will need to be prepared to attach patients to primary care providers.
 - Patients who live outside of the participating communities are not able to register at this time.
 - Instead, they will be provided information on accessing health services and supports in their community if they call 8-1-1.
- Planning is underway for new PCNs throughout the province, and as they come on board and have the infrastructure in place to attach patients, patients in those regions will be able to access the registry as well.
- When the registry is fully implemented in PCNs throughout B.C., this innovative tool will allow patients to register themselves, their family or anyone in their care.
 - A person in your care is someone you are caring for who does not live in your household, or someone who lives in your household but is not a family member.
 - For example, if someone is the caregiver for aging parents who do not live with them, then the parents would be considered to be in their care. Or if you are a home health nurse and have a patient who does not have a primary care provider, your patient is a person in your care.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

FOR INTERNAL USE – NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

- The Health Connect Registry is available online at HealthLinkBC.ca/health-connect-registry
 - For those without access to the Internet, who require translation or need to make a change to a current registration, telephone support is available by calling HealthLink BC at 8-1-1, or for the deaf and hard of hearing, 7-1-1.

General:

Q1. What is the Health Connect Registry?

- The Health Connect Registry is a provincial primary care patient registry provided and supported by HealthLink BC. Once fully operational, the registry will enable patient attachment to a primary care provider in communities throughout B.C.
- The Health Connect Registry includes two components – a public registry and an administrative interface (the online tool that PCN primary care coordinators and attachment coordinators use in their work to attach patients to providers). The administrative interface is what allows the PCN to see registrant information, and coordinate attachment to a primary care provider.
- The Health Connect Registry administrative interface is accessible to HealthLink BC for maintenance and support for PCNs, as well as to the PCN primary care coordinator and other specific designates such as back-up attachment coordinators or medical office assistants in the PCN specifically for the purposes of patient attachment.
- Residents of PCN communities that are part of the registry can request attachment to a family doctor or nurse practitioner by

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

FOR INTERNAL USE – NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

contacting HealthLink BC online or by telephone to have their names added to the public registry.

Q2. How does the registry work?

- Once patients have registered, a PCN primary care or attachment coordinator will review the registration and identify clinics and providers who have the capacity to attach the patient.
- The primary care or attachment coordinator is hired by the PCN.
- Providers and their clinics are responsible for contacting patients and setting up appointments to facilitate attachment. Following the initial introduction, the coordinator will be responsible for confirming with both the patient and the provider if the attachment is agreeable. If both agree, the coordinator will be responsible for updating the patient's status on the registry.
- Upon attachment, a patient remains on the list, but will be noted as attached and their registration status changed to a completed registration with successful attachment.

Q3. What does a phased, soft launch for PCNs look like?

- A phased, soft-launch approach to the registry for PCN communities means that for the time being, you can inform patients about the service available through the registry and we encourage you to engage with your PCN provider community, but there will be no active marketing or promotion of the Health Connect Registry through media or other public channels.
- Communications resources to support integration of the Health Connect Registry in select PCN communities are available for download at www.pcnbc.ca. Materials online include:

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

FOR INTERNAL USE – NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

- Key messages and frequently asked questions for providers; and
- Key messages and frequently asked questions for patients.
- You have also been provided with:
 - a poster you can use online or print; and,
 - A printable business card to distribute to patients encouraging registration.

Q4. Why is the ministry adopting a soft-launch approach for the Health Connect Registry?

- The ministry and HealthLink BC are adopting a soft launch approach as a way to slowly and successfully integrate the Health Connect Registry into PCN operations.
- Particularly in communities where there is a large attachment gap, a soft launch of the Health Connect Registry will help ensure that 8-1-1 call navigators and the PCN can effectively manage patient registration.
- We also want early adopters of the Health Connect Registry to have the opportunity to provide us with constructive feedback, which will support a broader launch. By taking a quality improvement approach, we can work with communities one-on-one to provide responsive training and mitigate potential issues.
- This approach ensure the Health Connect Registry is an agile resource for communities long-term.
- PCN communities that are soft launching the Health Connect Registry are to hold on broad marketing and advertising plans until

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

FOR INTERNAL USE – NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

given the go ahead by the ministry. This means PCNs are not to do any paid advertising or media announcements at this time.

Q5. Once we move out of the soft launch phase, does the ministry (or other provincial level partners) need to approve communication, marketing or outreach plans about the Health Connect Registry?

- The ministry will connect with PCNs about when you are able to communicate more broadly. Until then, PCNs are not to do any paid advertising or media announcements.
- All communications and outreach plans need to be created collaboratively, with input from the regional health authority and local division of family practice. As a result, there is an expectation that both partners coordinate review and sign-off.
- PCNs should contact the ministry, through the stakeholder engagement branch, or Doctors of BC, as part of the approval process. This will ensure consistency and coordination of messaging; increase the profile and exposure of the local PCN and mitigate potential challenges.
- We want to help ensure a consistent and positive experience for patients using the Health Connect Registry.
- Engaging the Ministry of Health will help us make sure that HealthLink BC 8-1-1 is able to successfully manage any increase in demand as a result of increased calls or online form use.
- Any local announcements relating to community-specific initiatives need to be coordinated through both Doctors of BC and the Ministry of Health. The ministry's Government Communications and Public Engagement office is accountable for all public

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

FOR INTERNAL USE – NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

announcements including news releases and ministerial materials such as speeches.

Q6. What are the expectations for the PCN in participating in the Health Connect Registry?

- PCNs are expected to:
 - Integrate the Health Connect Registry into the patient attachment process within their community.
 - Recruit primary care coordinators and attachment coordinators and train them on how to use the Health Connect Registry.
 - Collaborate and engage with key partner groups, such as Indigenous health providers and community stakeholders to develop and align with workflows, protocols and integration within primary care provider practices.
 - Maintain alignment with processes and guiding principles established by HealthLink BC in the Health Connect Registry User Guide.
 - Provide feedback to your HealthLink BC contact related to the overall Health Connect Registry to facilitate expansion and enhancement.
 - Actively participate in the development and maintenance of your community's Health Connect Registry page, and in future the PCN online web presence, which will be hosted through HealthLink BC.
 - Work with HealthLink BC to evaluate progress of registry operations and uptake in the PCN community.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

FOR INTERNAL USE – NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

Q7. What is the role of the Ministry of Health and HealthLink BC in supporting the registry?

- The Ministry of Health is committed to:
 - Supporting the ongoing progress and development of the registry and its alignment with PCN development and readiness.
 - Ensuring continued registry alignment with ministry strategic goals.
- HealthLink BC is committed to:
 - Providing 24/7 access for the public to register online at HealthLinkBC.ca or by phone (8-1-1).
 - Managing all technical, administrative and quality assurance aspects of the registry.
 - Providing issues management support and guidance to administrative interface users through registry management and support teams.

Q8. Is HealthLink BC adding additional staff to support the registry?

- HealthLink BC staff are available to support PCNs and ensure quality assurance of the registry and offer technical solutions.

Q9. Is there a cost for PCNs to participate in the registry?

- No. The registry is a part of the provincial primary care strategy that the Ministry of Health and PCNs are working together on developing.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

FOR INTERNAL USE – NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

Q10. Our PCN has already developed its own patient waitlist system. Do we have to participate in the Health Connect Registry?

- Communities with a current waitlist will need to work with HealthLink BC to merge their existing waitlist into the Health Connect Registry.
- Before a waitlist patient can be merged to the registry, HealthLink BC requires a core set of information. Patients registering themselves, their family or anyone in their care must provide the following:
 - First and last name
 - Full address including postal code
 - Personal health number
 - Date of birth
 - Gender
 - Preferred contact information (telephone number or email)
 - Consent for information to be shared
- If consent to share information with the Ministry of Health or HealthLink BC is not available, the individual or family cannot be added to the registry.
- If any other data elements are missing, HealthLink BC can gather this information as part of the merge process where each client is contacted to confirm their information, provide any additional information that may be required for the registry and continue with attachment to a regular primary care provider.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

FOR INTERNAL USE – NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

- The merging of pre-existing waitlists will require discussion between the PCN and HealthLink BC about the scope and size of the waitlist, secured data transfer options, and schedules for the merge. This discussion will take place as part of an initial kick-off meeting HealthLink BC will host with your PCN. Contact Chantelle.Cawston@gov.bc.ca or Sonia.Virk@gov.bc.ca if you have questions.

Q11. Can a patient be on another waitlist and still sign up for the Health Connect Registry?

- Yes, patients can be on a doctor's or nurse practitioner's waitlist and still sign up to be on the registry when it is available in their community.
- When a PCN begins to use the Health Connect Registry, PCN primary care coordinators will transition existing waitlists in your community onto the registry. This will ensure that those who were already on community lists maintain their place on the waitlist for a primary care provider, and that there is a single list for the PCN to work from.

Q12. Who maintains the registry?

- The Health Connect Registry is hosted and maintained by HealthLink BC. Updates to the registry are made by both HealthLink BC for registration information and PCNs for attachment information.
- In the PCNs, primary care coordinators and attachment coordinators make updates to patient status in the registry.

Q13. Will the PCN or HealthLink BC need to go through periodically and make sure that patients are still wanting to be on the registry?

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

FOR INTERNAL USE – NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

- Yes, HealthLink BC is responsible for the quality of the registry and this includes periodic review of registrant information and contact with registrants to confirm they continue to require a regular primary care provider.

Q14. Who do we contact if we have issues with the registry?

- HealthLink BC is responsible for any registry specific technical difficulties.
- Support for technical difficulties is available by calling Health Connect Registry Support at 8-1-1.

Q15. What are the expectations for primary care providers as part of the Health Connect Registry?

- Primary care providers are expected to:
 - Participate in the soft launch and implementation of the registry and support patients to find a primary care provider in their community through the Health Connect Registry;
 - Collaborate with PCN staff to update their capacity for new patients and determine processes to help with attachment in the PCN community; and,
 - Let the PCN know when they have capacity to attach patients and provide the PCN's primary care coordinator with information once a patient is attached.

Q16. What are the benefits of the registry for primary care networks and providers?

- The Health Connect Registry will securely collect details from patients and families in established PCN communities and use it to

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

FOR INTERNAL USE – NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

facilitate their attachment to a provider as capacity becomes available. As a result, patients will be connected to care and services, enabling providers to have a greater impact on the overall improvements to health outcomes in B.C.

- The registry will help relieve some of the administrative tasks from care providers allowing them to focus this time on patient care instead of the processes that support attachment.
- Providers will not need to maintain their independent waitlists and can direct any patient inquiries to the HealthLink BC online or telephone registration process.

Q17. What are the benefits of the registry for patients?

- The registry is a simple, easy to use online form that lets patients indicate their need for a primary care provider.
- Patients can register themselves, their family and people in their care for a family doctor or nurse practitioner.
- The registry will provide the registrant's PCN with the information needed to attach them to a family doctor or nurse practitioner as capacity becomes available. When patients are attached to a regular family doctor or nurse practitioner, they are generally more satisfied with the care they receive. This attachment helps prevent health conditions and reduces emergency department visits. It also supports patients' health throughout the course of their life.
- A centralized system also supports a simplified process for coordinating primary care attachment for those who move between geographical areas within the province.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

FOR INTERNAL USE – NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

- For example, if a patient moves to another community which is participating in the Health Connect Registry, they do not need to re-register, but do need to update their registration information by calling 8-1-1.
- While patients wait to be attached to a regular provider, they will be provided with information primary care services in their community by calling 8-1-1.

Q18. If a patient moves to another community that also has a PCN participating in the Health Connect Registry will the patient automatically be transferred to that waitlist?

- If a patient moves to another community that is participating in the registry, they do not need to re-register, but do need to update their registration information by calling 8-1-1. They will then be switched to that community's list.

Q19. As a primary care provider or clinic, who do I contact if I have capacity within my practice?

- Primary care providers who have capacity to take on new patients should contact their PCN's primary care coordinator.

Q20. Which PCN communities are currently participating in the Health Connect Registry?

- To support a smooth launch for PCNs and patients, the registry is taking a phased approach.
- New communities are quickly being added to the Health Connect Registry system. Patients can call 8-1-1 to find out the latest information on which communities are a part of the registry.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

FOR INTERNAL USE – NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

Q21. Who can sign up to be on the registry? What are the eligibility requirements?

- Only people in communities that are currently participating in the registry and where a PCN has launched can participate in the Health Connect Registry.
 - Patients who live outside of these communities are not able to register at this time, however the registry is being phased into new communities as new PCNs are established throughout British Columbia.
 - In communities that do not yet have access, patients will be provided suggestions for accessing health services and supports in their community when they call 8-1-1.
 - People registering themselves, their family or anyone in their care must provide information about themselves, including their address. By providing an address we can determine if the person lives within the boundaries of a participating PCN.

Q22. Can someone who already has a primary caregiver sign up for the registry?

- Yes, anyone located in a PCN can sign up for the registry. Patients with primary care providers who are retiring or relocating are encouraged to register.
- The registry form will prompt people to answer ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to questions about whether they currently have a primary care provider. The form will ask people for the name of their most recent primary care provider and when the last time they saw their provider was.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

FOR INTERNAL USE – NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

- Patients who don't have a regular primary care provider will be attached first, before patients who already have one but are looking to switch providers.

Q23. How can patients in my PCN sign up for the registry?

- Patients can register themselves, their family or anyone in their care through the Health Connect Registry online at HealthLinkBC.ca/health-connect-registry.
- Telephone assistance is available by calling HealthLink BC at 8-1-1, or for the deaf and hard of hearing, 7-1-1.
- Translation services are available.

Q24. How are patients matched with a primary care provider?

- Attachment will be provided on a first-come, first-serve basis.
- PCNs can establish priority attachment processes to expedite support for clients with certain health conditions.
- A goal of the Health Connect Registry is fair access. This means making sure every patient has the same opportunity as any other patient. It is at the discretion of each PCN to determine how they will connect patients to primary care providers in a way that best supports patients' needs.

Q25. Will patients have a choice in the primary caregiver they are attached to?

- Patients can indicate their gender preference for a primary care provider.
- Once patients are contacted for attachment by the PCN, they can indicate their preference to be paired with a family doctor or nurse

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

FOR INTERNAL USE – NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

practitioner in addition to their preferred languages. At this time, patients can also flag any accessibility issues.

- Q26.** If a patient and their family members are all part of the registry, will they be matched to the same primary care provider and at the same time?
- Attachment is done on a first-come first-serve basis; however, every effort will be made to attach family members at the same time and to the same provider.
 - The registry supports the linking of family members to support group attachment.
- Q27.** If a primary care provider doesn't feel that a patient matched with them is a good fit, what actions can they take?
- The primary care provider can advise their PCN so the patient can be informed, and they can be returned to the list for attachment with another provider.
 - The family doctor or nurse practitioner must decline attachment in accordance with their professional practice standards. Standards for nurse practitioners can be found on the [BC College of Nursing Professionals website](#). Standards for family doctors can be found on the [College of Physicians and Surgeons of BC website](#).
- Q28.** Can a patient decline being matched to a provider more than once?
- It is important the relationship between primary care provider and patient is a good match to ensure supports are in place for long-term health.
 - The patient, family doctor, or nurse practitioner can decline attachment. Patients will remain active on the registry with their original registration date intact if:

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

FOR INTERNAL USE – NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

- The family doctor or nurse practitioner declines attachment in accordance with their professional practice standards. Standards for nurse practitioners can be found on the [BC College of Nurse and Nurse Practitioners website](#). Standards for family doctors can be found on the [College of Physicians and Surgeons of BC website](#).
- The patient declines their first proposed attachment.
- The second decline of attachment will result in the patient's registration date being changed to the second declination date. This timeline can be modified at the local level, depending on the capacity of the PCN.

Q29. How long will it take for a patient to be matched with a family doctor or nurse practitioner?

- Adding teams of health-care providers throughout the province is key for the transformation of B.C.'s primary care system. More team members in the health-care system creates an opportunity to shift how services have traditionally been provided and will create more space in the system for people to access a regular family doctor or nurse practitioner.
- As primary caregivers gain capacity to take on new patients, people will continue to be matched. That timeline will depend on the number of patients on the waitlist and be unique to each PCN and its practitioners.

Q30. If a patient moves and wants to be matched in their new community, are they automatically removed from their position on the list in their previous community?

- No, however the patient would need to call 8-1-1 to update their information, as patients can only be registered in the community they live in, and if that community is connected to the registry.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

FOR INTERNAL USE – NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

Q31. If a patient does not live in a community that is connected to the Health Connect Registry, but works in one that is or is willing to travel to a connected community, can they register in that region?

- No. If a patient does not live in a community with a participating PCN, they are unable to register at this time.

Q32. Does the registry only match patients with doctors and nurse practitioners? I have patients asking to be connected to see other health-care professionals. What do I tell them?

- Yes – at this point, the registry only connects patients to either a family doctor or nurse practitioner.
- However, we know British Columbians expect to be able to access health-care services through a publicly funded system that is there for them when and where they need it.
- That is why primary care teams that include family doctors and nurse practitioners working in family practice, maternity care, health management and counselling are being established throughout the province.

Q33. What personal information is collected by the registry?

- The following patient information is collected by the registry:
 - First and last name
 - Date of birth
 - Gender
 - Contact information
 - Personal health number

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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- A PCN can collect more information with consent from the patient
- Callers can register a third party – if they have a close relationship with, or a responsibility for, the health and well-being of the person being registered.

Q34. I would like more information about my prospective patients. What information can I tell them that they may be asked about?

- Primary care coordinators when contacting registrants for attachment can ask additional health-related questions that may assist the PCN in the attachment process or support the development of more balanced patient panels.
- The additional information that can be gathered and added to the patient's registration, include items such as:
 - Accessibility issues
 - Pregnancy (current/planned)
 - Current prescription medications
 - Frequency of use for primary care resources such as walk-in clinics, emergency, and hospital
 - Frail and elderly-related concerns such as personal care, balance, difficulty chewing or swallowing and weight loss
 - Mental health
 - Substance use
 - Chronic medical conditions

Q35. How does the registry protect patient privacy?

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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- The Ministry of Health and HealthLink BC are required to comply with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPPA).
- There is an expectation PCNs will adhere to privacy acts within their environments, including the Personal Information Privacy Act and Health Insurance and Portability and Accountability Act.
- The registry process is designed to reduce barriers to registration while assuring compliance with FOIPPA.