

## Key Messages

### Health Connect Registry – For Attachment Coordinators, Administrators and Care Providers

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- The Health Connect Registry is a simple, easy-to-use tool available to British Columbians across the province. With the Health Connect Registry, people can register themselves or others to be attached to a primary care provider – either a family doctor or a nurse practitioner – within their community.
- The Ministry of Health has launched the Registry in a phased approach. First launched in 2019, the Registry was initially available in a select number of participating Primary Care Network (PCN) communities. As of July 2023, the Registry is available to everyone living in British Columbia. People must have a Personal Health Number (PHN) to register.
- Health Connect Registry staff, HealthLink BC's 8-1-1 Health Service Navigators, and people with a responsibility for facilitating attachment of patients from the Registry will have access to the Registry for the purpose of attaching patients.
- Administrators and Providers can share the link – [HealthLinkBC.ca/health-connect-registry](https://HealthLinkBC.ca/health-connect-registry) - with patients in their communities. Patients will be able to register themselves, their family or anyone in their care for attachment to a provider in their community.
- The Health Connect Registry team will be working with communities that may already have a waitlist, such as Divisions of Family Practice or a Primary Care Network, to transfer the list to the Health Connect Registry. In this way communities will have one, centralized list to attach from as capacity is available.
- The Health Connect Registry is available in all communities across B.C., including those who are not yet implemented into a PCN.
- As of July 2023, people can register themselves, their family or anyone in their care at any time either online or by calling 8-1-1 (phone services are available 24/7).
  - 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.
- The Health Connect Registry is available online at [HealthLinkBC.ca/health-connect-registry](https://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.
- Those who are deaf or hard of hearing can call 7-1-1 or contact HealthLink BC using Video Relay Services (VRS) or Teletypewriter (TTY). Patients or their caregivers can visit [Video Relay Services](#) to sign up and then ask them to call HealthLink BC at 604 215-5101.
  - VRS provides sign language interpretation. It is free for registered deaf, hard of hearing or speech-impaired Canadians who use sign language. VRS is available when making telephone calls using Internet and cell-phone technology.

## Questions and Answers

### Health Connect Registry – For Attachment Coordinators, Administrators and Care Providers

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#### What is the Health Connect Registry?

- The Health Connect Registry is an easy-to-use online form available to people in British Columbia with a Personal Health Number to register for a primary care provider – either a family doctor or a nurse practitioner.
- When a person registers, they are added to a centralized registry of primary care providers across their community. An attachment coordinator uses the centralized Registry to match people with a provider.
- People can register themselves, their family or a person in their care to get matched with a primary care provider.
- The Health Connect Registry includes two components – a public registry and an attachment interface. The attachment interface is the online tool that allows attachment coordinators to see registrant information, and to coordinate attachment to a primary care provider.
- The Health Connect Registry is part of the Provincial Attachment System.
- The attachment interface is accessible to HealthLink BC for maintenance and support, as well as to the attachment coordinators and other specific designates such as back-up attachment coordinators or medical office assistants for the purposes of patient attachment.
- Residents across B.C. who have a Personal Health Number can request attachment to a family doctor or nurse practitioner using the online form at [HealthLinkBC.ca/health-connect-registry](https://HealthLinkBC.ca/health-connect-registry).
- People who are unable to register online can call 8-1-1 to register.
  - Those who are deaf or hard of hearing can call 7-1-1 or contact HealthLink BC **8-1-1** using Video Relay Services (VRS), or Teletypewriter (TTY). Patients or their caregivers can visit [Video Relay Services](#) to sign up and have them call HealthLink BC at 604-215-5101.

- VRS provides sign language interpretation. It is free for registered deaf, hard of hearing or speech-impaired Canadians who use sign language. VRS is available when making telephone calls using Internet and cell-phone technology.
- Translation services are available in over 130 languages.

### **How does the Health Connect Registry work?**

- Once patients have registered themselves or a person in their care on the Health Connect Registry, an attachment coordinator will review the registration and identify clinics and providers who have the capacity to attach the patient as capacity is available.
- The attachment coordinator is a member of the PCN, Divisions of Family Practice and/or community team and facilitate attachment.
- Providers and their clinics are responsible for contacting patients and setting up appointments to facilitate attachment. Following the initial introduction, the attachment coordinator will be responsible for confirming that both the patient and the provider agree to attachment. If both agree, the coordinator will be responsible for updating the patient's status on the Registry.
- Upon attachment, a patient's registration is complete.

### **Why was the Health Connect Registry created?**

- The Health Connect Registry was created to simplify the process of helping people in British Columbia connect with a primary care provider, such as a family doctor or nurse practitioner.
- This is one more way we are building a primary care system that makes care more accessible to all British Columbians.
- Over the past several years, the Ministry of Health has deployed a "soft launch" approach to the HCR in communities, meaning that it had implemented one PCN or community at a time, with no public advertisement.
- This allowed us to get important insight into the community provider experience and informed the approach of a broader provincial rollout.
- Launching the HCR province wide is one of many additional steps to make it easier for people to find health care providers across communities in British

Columbia.

### **How does the Health Connect Registry fit into the greater primary health care system?**

- The Ministry is working with Doctors of BC, BC Family Doctors, and other partners to create a new provincial attachment system to facilitate attachment between patients and providers and to better measure progress.
- The Provincial attachment system will merge existing local attachment solutions with the provincial Health Connect Registry as part of a single, integrated and digitally enabled platform that will support connection of patients seeking attachment with providers who have availability to take on new patients.
- The system will provide better insight into primary care clinic and provider capacity in communities throughout the province, as well as patients already attached to family physicians and nurse practitioners (i.e., their patient panels).
- The system will also provide a more effective approach to actively measuring and managing progress in terms of attachment.

### **Does the ministry (or other provincial level partners) need to approve communication, marketing or outreach plans about the Health Connect Registry?**

- The ministry will work with PCNs and communities about communications they may want to organize for their community such as advertising, media announcements or social media posts.
- All communications and outreach plans should to be created collaboratively, with input from the Ministry of Health, regional health authority and local Division of Family Practice.
- PCNs and communities should use existing, ministry approved Health Connect Registry communication materials (e.g., key messages, question and answers, poster and rack card).
- If you would like to alter the materials in any way, contact the HealthLink BC team to gain approval. This will ensure:
  - Consistency and coordination of messaging;
  - An increased profile and exposure for the local community; and

- Mitigation of any potential challenges or issues.
- This approach will help to ensure a consistent and positive experience for patients using the Health Connect Registry across B.C.
- Engaging early will help make sure that HealthLink BC 8-1-1 is able to successfully manage any increase in demand resulting from increased calls and online form use.

### **What are the expectations for communities when it comes to using and facilitating attachment with the Health Connect Registry?**

- Communities are expected to:
  - Integrate the Health Connect Registry into the patient attachment process within their community.
  - Recruit attachment coordinators, who will be trained by HealthLink BC 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 policies, processes and guiding principles established by Ministry for the Health Connect Registry.
  - Provide feedback about the Health Connect Registry to your HealthLink BC contact, to support enhancement of the system.
  - Actively participate in the development and maintenance of your community's Health Connect Registry page, and any future PCN online web presences, hosted through HealthLink BC.
  - Work with HealthLink BC and Ministry of Health to evaluate the progress of registry operations and use within your community.

### **How and when can our community gain access to the Health Connect Registry?**

- The Health Connect Registry team at HealthLink BC will be contacting communities to begin the onboarding process starting in July.

- The Health Connect Registry team is working on this with the Divisions of Family Practice, Family Practice Services Committee and the Ministry of Health's Primary Care Division.
- If you have questions or would like more information, please contact the Regional Director for your area in the Primary Care Division.

### **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 implementation and development of the Registry and its alignment within communities.
  - 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 technical, administrative and quality assurance aspects of the Registry.
  - Providing issues management support and guidance to attachment interface users through registry management and support teams.

### **How will HealthLink BC staff support the Registry?**

- HealthLink BC staff are available to support communities by answering questions from the public and facilitating the registration process, ensure quality assurance of the Registry and offer technical solutions.
- HealthLink BC also provides training and systems support to attachment coordinators.

### **Is there a cost for communities to participate in the Registry?**

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

### **We already have a patient waitlist system. How will this integrate with the**

## **Health Connect Registry?**

- Communities with a current waitlist will work with HealthLink BC to merge their existing community or clinic waitlist(s) into the Health Connect Registry.
- Before patients from a waitlist can be merged into the Health Connect 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
  - Contact information (telephone number and email)
  - Consent for information to be shared
- If consent to share information with the Ministry of Health or HealthLink BC is not available, this will have to be obtained by the community before an individual or family can be added to the Registry.
- If any other data elements are missing, HealthLink BC can gather this information as part of the merge process. Patients can be contacted to confirm their information and provide any additional details that may be required for the Registry and to continue with attachment to a regular primary care provider.

## **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.
- Eventually all community waitlists will be transitioned to the Health Connect Registry.
- People who were already on community lists will maintain their original registration date.

## **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 communities for attachment information.



- Within communities, attachment coordinators can, and are expected to, update patient status' in the Registry as needed.
- Changes to information in the Registry can be made by contacting 8-1-1.

**Will communities or HealthLink BC need to go through periodically and make sure that patients are still wanting to be on the Registry?**

- HealthLink BC will work with communities to develop a joint approach to ensure access to centralized patient information is in place to support consistent attachment. Accelerated attachment processes will be supported within communities for emergent needs patients.
- As such, both HealthLink BC and communities are responsible for the quality of the Registry. This will require review of registrant information and contact with registrants to confirm they continue to require a regular primary care provider and would like to remain on the Registry.

**Who should care providers contact if they have issues with the Registry?**

- HealthLink BC is responsible for supporting attachment coordinators with any Registry-specific technical difficulties or will escalate to a tiered support system if unable to resolve.
- Attachment coordinators should reach out to their designated Health Connect Registry contact at HealthLink BC if they need support with technical difficulties.

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

- Primary care providers are expected to:
  - Participate in the launch and implementation of the Registry, and support patients in finding a primary care provider in their community through the Health Connect Registry;
  - Collaborate with PCN and community staff, or other administrative staff, to update their capacity for new patients and determine processes to help with attachment in the community; and,

- For communities that have a PCN fully in place, let the PCN know when they have capacity to attach patients and provide the PCN's attachment coordinator with information once a patient is attached.

### **What are the benefits of the Registry for primary care networks and providers?**

- The Health Connect Registry securely collects details from patients and families who would like to be attached to a primary care provider.
- The registry helps to relieve some of the administrative burden care providers are experiencing, allowing them to focus their time on patient care instead of the processes that support attachment.
  - Communities will be able to redirect "Looking for a primary care provider..." calls from clinics to HealthLink BC
  - Communities will have access to centralized patient information across their community to support consistent attachment mechanisms.
  - The registry introduces additional quality assurance to ensure accurate and up-to-date patient information.
- The registry also supports attaching patients who have emergent healthcare needs faster to primary care providers in the community.

### **What are the benefits of the Registry for patients?**

- The registry is a simple, easy-to-use online form that helps patients find a regular family doctor or nurse practitioner within their community.
- Patients can register themselves, their family, and/or people in their care for a family doctor or nurse practitioner.
- Registration is available 24/7 online (or by phone with support available for deaf, hard of hearing or speech-impaired; and in over 130 languages)
- The registry will provide the registrant's community 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.
- The registry provides a centralized tool, which supports a consistent registration experience for all, regardless of their location in British Columbia.
- The registry also supports a simplified process for coordinating primary care attachment for those who move between geographical areas within the province.
  - For example, if a patient moves to another community, they do not need to re-register for the Registry, but they do need to update their contact information by calling 8-1-1.
- While patients wait to be attached to a regular provider they access health advice and information on primary care services in their community by calling 8-1-1.

**If a patient moves to another community will the patient automatically be transferred to the Health Connect Registry waitlist in their new community?**

- If a patient moves to another community they don't need to register again but will need to update their contact information by calling 8-1-1.
- They will then be switched to their new community's list and will retain their original registration date.

**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 attachment coordinator or refer to new supports and processes available from the Provincial Attachment System.

**Who can sign up to be on the Registry? What are the eligibility requirements?**

- Any resident in British Columbia can register themselves, their family, and/or an individual in their care for the Health Connect Registry.

- Individuals on the Health Connect Registry waitlist who are not yet attached to a provider can learn more about the health services and supports in their community by calling 8-1-1.
- People registering themselves, their family or anyone in their care must provide information about themselves, including their PHN and address. Providing an address will determine the correct community that the individual should be attached in.

### **Can someone who already has a primary caregiver sign up for the Registry?**

- Anyone in British Columbia can sign up for the Registry. Patients with primary care providers who are retiring or relocating or if the patient is moving or would like a different care provider, they 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.

### **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](https://HealthLinkBC.ca/health-connect-registry).
- Telephone assistance is available by calling HealthLink BC at 8-1-1. For the deaf and hard of hearing (TTY), call **7-1-1**, or for Video Relay Service, visit [Video Relay Services](#) and call 604-215-5101.
- Translation services are available in over 130 languages.

### **How are patients matched with a primary care provider?**

- Attachment to a primary care provider takes into consideration the patient's priority, community attachment mechanisms in place and/or specific community services and needs.
- For example, there may be focused attachment efforts on specific, priority populations, including those who may require priority attachment, Indigenous registrants and families to First Nations-led clinic initiatives.

### **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 they can indicate their preference to be paired with a family doctor or nurse practitioner in addition to their preferred languages. At this time, patients can also flag any accessibility issues.

**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?**

- 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.

**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 attachment coordinator so the patient can be informed. After this point the patient will 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](#).

**Can a patient decline being matched to a provider more than once?**

- It is important the relationship between a primary care provider and a 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:
  - 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](#);
- Or if the patient declines their first proposed attachment.

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

- Timelines will depend on the number of patients on a community's waitlist and capacity within that community.
- Timelines will be unique to each community and its practitioners.
- 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.

**If a patient moves and wants to be matched in their new community, are they automatically removed from their previous community list?**

- The patient remains on the list and maintains their original registration date but should call 8-1-1 to update their information, as patients are attached in the community they live in.

**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?**

- 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 might include a family doctor or nurse practitioner as well as other providers like Indigenous health professionals, mental health counsellors and social workers working in family practices, maternity care, health management and counselling are being established throughout the province.

### **What personal information is collected by the Registry?**

- The following patient information is collected by the Registry:
  - Consent to share personal information
  - Confirmation that the patient is a resident of B.C.
  - Personal health number
  - First name, last name,
  - Sex (male, female, other)
  - Date of birth
  - Address (street address, city/town, postal code), or if no fixed address, city/town
  - Preferred method of contact (phone, text message (SMS) or email)
  - Whether translation services are required and preferred language, if not English
  - Whether the patient has a current a family doctor or nurse practitioner
  - Name and city/town of most recent family doctor or nurse practitioner
  - When the patient last saw their family doctor or nurse practitioner
  - Preference for a family doctor or nurse practitioner of a specific gender
  - How far the patient is able to travel to see a family doctor or nurse practitioner
- Communities can collect 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.

### **How does the Registry protect patient privacy?**

- 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 that communities 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.