

April 2019

SOS Division of Family Practice: Primary Care Network Q/A

What is Primary Care?

Primary Care refers to a patient's everyday healthcare needs, usually addressed at a family doctor's clinic.

What is the Primary Care Network?

- The Primary Care Network is a BC Ministry of Health initiative, and is essentially a way for primary care providers to work more closely together and in teams, in order to provide more care for patients within a region, and to attract more primary care providers to that region.
- For example, with Primary Care Network funding, we may be able to open a new clinic, and/or may be able to hire more nurse practitioners or family physicians to join current practices.

Why do we need this change?

- More than 10,000 patients are currently without a family physician in Penticton and Summerland alone. With expected retirements, this number will continue to rise.
- We know that most new physicians want to practice in larger clinics, and as part of a team.

Where will the Primary Care Network be implemented?

- In the entire South Okanagan Similkameen, with the first phase rolling out in the communities of Penticton, Summerland, Okanagan Falls and the Penticton Indian Band.
- Planning has begun in Oliver, Osoyoos, Keremeos, Princeton, Osoyoos Indian Band, Upper Similkameen Indian Band and Lower Similkameen Indian Band.

What changes can patients or people looking for primary care providers expect?

- By summer 2019, we expect that there will be a way for patients to register that they need a primary care provider.
- By 2020, with stable funding, we expect to have more family physicians and nurse practitioners working in our community, and we expect that there will be a mechanism in place to attach new patients to these providers.

Where else has this been successfully modeled?

- Primary Care Networks are already set up in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Ontario, as a way to increase access to primary care providers. In BC, our region is among the first of five in the province selected to lead this change.

Who has been working on the Penticton/Summerland service plan?

- Primary Care Network is funded by the BC Ministry of Health and supported by the General Practice Services Committee. The South Okanagan Similkameen Division of Family Practice, Interior Health and the Penticton Indian Band have worked together to design this initial Primary Care Network plan.
- Communities will have an opportunity to give input on how best to implement the plan.

How can patients find out about new developments?

- Check the BC Ministry of Health website over the coming months to learn more.
- Individual family physician offices do not, at this time, have new information on Primary Care Network or new providers at this time. We will post any new information regarding primary care providers on the SOS Division website: divisionsbc.ca/south-okanagan-similkameen