
NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
2020HLTH0290-001750
Sept. 15, 2020

Ministry of Health
Interior Health

Improving primary care in Central Interior

WILLIAMS LAKE – Government is transforming everyday health care for people living in the Central Interior rural region by establishing a primary care network, which will bring additional resources and strengthened support to the region.

“As part of our government’s primary care strategy, we’re transforming the way people in every corner of the province access health care. We’re establishing primary care networks to provide team-based care that meets the unique needs of communities and people,” said Adrian Dix, Minister of Health. “The primary care network in Central Interior rural will support residents in getting access to the patient-centred care they need and deserve.”

The Ministry of Health will provide approximately \$4.42 million in annual funding to the primary care network once it is fully established.

Over the next four years, residents of the Central Interior will benefit from approximately 31 full-time equivalent health providers who will provide better access to primary care. This includes registered nurses, nurse practitioners, Aboriginal patient navigators and allied health professionals, such as social workers, mental health counsellors, dietitians, respiratory therapist, and a traditional wellness co-ordinator.

The network of team-based primary care providers will see community partners work together to ensure tens of thousands of people have access to comprehensive, co-ordinated and team-based primary care services for all of their day-to-day health-care needs in the region.

The network will provide a full range of accessible, everyday health services that will better support patients and providers. It will service Williams Lake, 100 Mile and surrounding communities.

The network was developed to better meet the specific needs of the community and to strengthen services identified as high priority. These include:

- better access to chronic disease management;
- improved access to services for individuals with mild to moderate mental-health and substance-use services;
- better co-ordinated services for families and seniors who are frail and people with complex health issues;
- more access to comprehensive services for people living in poverty; and
- culturally safe care and appropriate care for Indigenous people.

For people and families, it means getting faster, better access to their primary care team or provider, even on evenings and weekends, as well as being connected to appropriate services

and supports in the community.

Over the next four years, the network will work to attach approximately 6,900 patients to a consistent primary care provider in the region.

In addition, a traditional wellness co-ordinator, nurse practitioners and allied health professionals will be recruited in support of Indigenous health in Tsilhqot'in Nation, Secwepemc Nation and the Dakelh Dene Nation. For Indigenous peoples, this will mean more co-ordinated and culturally safe primary care support.

The primary care network is a partnership between the Ministry of Health, Interior Health, the Central Interior Rural Division of Family Practice, Secwepemc, Tsilhqot'in and Dakelh Dene Nations and the First Nation Health Authority.

Learn More:

To learn more about the Province's primary health-care strategy, visit:

<https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2018PREM0034-001010>

To learn more about the Province's strategy to increase the number of nurse practitioners, visit: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2018HLTH0034-000995>

To learn more about the Province's strategy to recruit and retain more family medicine graduates, visit: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/releases/2018HLTH0052-001043>

Two backgrounders follow.

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BACKGROUND 1

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Facts about the Central Interior rural primary care network

According to BC Stats data, the communities that the primary care network will serve have a combined population of 41,831. Services will be available in Williams Lake, 100 Mile House and several small communities in the Secwepemc, Tsilhqot'in and Dakelh Dene Nations.

Primary care networks mean that patients:

- who do not have a regular primary care provider - a family doctor or nurse practitioner - will be able to get one;
- will have an ongoing relationship with their primary care provider, which is important for their life-long health;
- will get access to faster, more convenient care from their doctor or nurse practitioner and the care team;
- will be provided and connected with a range of appropriate and accessible services and supports;
- will be informed about all aspects of their care in community; and,
- will know where to go to get the care they need, including evenings and weekends.

New resources being allocated include:

- one FTE general practitioner physician.
- 3.75 FTE nurse practitioners.
- 6.9 FTE registered nurses.
- 19.5 FTE allied health professionals:
 - three FTE social workers
 - three dietitians, including 1 FTE at Secwepemc
 - two FTE physiotherapists
 - two FTE mental health clinicians
 - one FTE traditional wellness co-ordinator
 - one FTE clinical pharmacist
 - one FTE respiratory therapist
 - one FTE occupational therapist
 - 1.5 FTE allied health professionals at Ulkatcho
 - two FTE Aboriginal patient navigators
 - two FTE primary care mental health counsellors

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BACKGROUND 2

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What people are saying about primary care networks

Dr. Doug Cochrane, board chair, Interior Health –

“Partnerships with Aboriginal communities and the division of family practice are foundational to our approach to building and sustaining a system of strong, culturally safe health services in the Central Interior rural region and across Interior Health. By working together with our partners, including the Tsilhqot’in, Ulkatcho and Secwepemc nations, we know the primary care network will reflect the unique cultural and health-care needs of the communities they serve.”

Central Interior Rural Primary Care Network Steering Committee (which includes Central Interior Rural Division of Family Practice, Tsilhqot’in First Nation, Ulkatcho First Nation, Secwepemc First Nation, First Nations Health Authority, local health care professionals, and Interior Health) –

“The partners of the PCN are excited to see years of hard work and collaboration come to fruition with a substantial amount of resources coming to our region. These resources will connect more patients with primary care services through team-based care and additional primary care providers.”

Michael Sandler, executive director, Nurses and Nurse Practitioners of BC –

“The Association of the Nurses and Nurse Practitioners of B.C. is pleased that the knowledge, skills and expertise of the entire health-care team will improve access to health care for British Columbians through the new primary care networks. We believe that this approach will be pivotal in ensuring B.C. families feel connected to their health-care team and we are excited to see the launch of primary care networks in B.C.”

Dr. Kathleen Ross, president, Doctors of BC –

“The best health-care systems in the world have strong primary care and we hope that the primary care network initiative provides additional needed resources to doctors serving their community, especially those that strengthen longitudinal care in these pandemic times. A primary care network will collectively increase a community’s capacity to provide greater access to primary care for those who need it, especially for vulnerable patients and those with complex health conditions.”

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