HealthForceOntario

Taking Over a Family Practice

Transition into Practice Services (TiPS)

HealthForceOntario Marketing and Recruitment Agency

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Congratulations on taking over an established family practice. There are a number of steps required to ensure a smooth transition.

Meeting the Group and Formalizing a Letter of Intent

1. Create a letter of intent

- Once you and the outgoing physician have both agreed that you will take over the practice, ask the outgoing physician to provide a letter of intent. Include items that you have agreed upon, such as:
  - Dates for onboarding, locuming, and transition of the practice.
  - Contingency plans for coverage in an unexpected scenario, such as illness or failure to pass exams.
  - Details and terms for any amount that will be paid to the outgoing physician.
  - Details and terms for any capital goods included in the practice takeover (e.g., medical supplies and equipment, exam beds, IT systems and EMR, telephone) as well as any exclusions.
- Consult with your lawyer before signing the letter of intent.
  - Ask your lawyer about stipulating that the letter of intent be contingent upon review and acceptance of all of the agreements that are related to the practice.

2. Meet with the Physician Group

- Meet with all of the physicians in the group/clinic prior to finalizing a letter of intent. In some cases, agreement is needed from all group members before a transition can be initiated.
- Understand the obligations the group has to the MOHLTC according to the FHG/FHN/FHO Agreement. The group may also have a separate governance agreement.
- Work with the Lead Physician to complete the paperwork required to apply to the FHG/FHN/FHO. (More details below in the **Applications** section.)
- Understand your obligations related to practice management in your clinic space and the day-to-day work expectations. Review the clinic group's written agreements, which may include such things as:
  - Cost sharing agreement
  - Association or partnership agreement
  - Employment contracts
  - Call obligations
  - Lease
- Review all agreements with a lawyer and sign as applicable.

Transition Plan

1. Create a mentorship/onboarding plan with the outgoing physician

- Create a plan that considers timing related to your timelines and the ministry's. Build in time to get oriented to the EMR, billing, HR, and administrative procedures.
- Involve colleagues in the group, as appropriate.

2. Determine a transition plan for existing employees

- Depending on the work arrangements of the clinic, there may be a need to develop a transition plan for existing employees. Seek legal advice related to obligations to employees and the appropriate ways to handle the employment contracts.
- Become familiar with HR best practices for medical practices.
- Meet with clinic staff to ensure they are aware of the onboarding plan and involve them when possible.

Applications

1. Apply for a CPSO Independent License

- Apply **at least 6 weeks** in advance of your start date to ensure you receive your license before you start practising. Applications are assessed in the order they are received and if you are currently finishing your residency program, you can apply before you write your exams and complete your training. Exam results and a letter from your residency program will be forwarded to the CPSO upon completion.
- See the CPSO Guidelines: Applying for Independent Practice page.
- Contact the Registration Department at inquiries@cpso.on.ca or 416-967-2617 / 1-800-268-7096 if you have questions.

2. Apply for an OHIP Billing Number

- Once you receive your Independent Practice Licence from the CPSO, you can apply for OHIP Billing Number. You can start practising while you are waiting for your billing number as it is possible to bill retroactively for up to 6 months.
- Download the application form.

3. Update your CMPA status to your new Type of Work (TOW) code

- Once the CPSO issues your Independent Licence, contact the CMPA to update your resident status by calling 1-800-267-6522 or by using the online application form.
- Be informed about the fee schedules. The CMPA will automatically send this information to the Medical Liability Protection (MLP) Reimbursement Program. You will continue being reimbursed at your new rate.
- Apply for the Medical Liability Protection (MLP) Reimbursement Program if you are not already participating.

4. Apply to the MOHLTC to replace the outgoing physician or locum at the practice

- To initiate the process, the Lead Physician will request an Application from the MOHLTC on your behalf. This will require your CPSO and OHIP Billing Number.
- For instructions and questions, contact the Primary Care Branch at PrimaryCareInquiries@ontario.ca or 1-866-766-0266.
- Submit the application, confirming the information is accurate and complete. Corrections and missing information may delay your planned start date.
- Choose an expected date of transition at least 8 -12 weeks after the application is submitted (always the 1st of the month).
- If you plan to locum at the practice during the transition, apply to the MOHLTC in this capacity first. Application for the permanent FHO spot can take place separately.

5. Apply for hospital privileges (if required)

- Contact the Medical Affairs/Chief-of-Staff office at the hospital to obtain the credentialing package and complete requirements.
- Allow 6 – 8 weeks for the credentialing process, depending on the hospital. Inquire whether it is possible to start the application process for credentialing concurrently with your CPSO application.

Communications and Logistics

1. Inform Patients

- When you have confirmation the practice transition will go forward, work with the outgoing physician to create a plan to inform patients. Communication methods could include:
  - Messaging for clinic staff to use when talking to patients
  - Posting a letter in the waiting room
  - Advertising in a local newspaper
  - Notifying patients in person when they are seen by the outgoing physician
  - Mailing a notice to all patients
- Inform staff about the communication plan for patients. It is important they understand what to communicate to patients and when to disclose information.
- If you are not taking over the entire roster, create a plan to inform patients about the plan for their care. Include details about how patients can obtain their medical records if they need to seek care at another clinic.

2. Notify practice stakeholders:

- Create a letter that includes your details as the incoming physician and the transition dates. Stakeholders may include:
  - Labs
  - Landlord
  - Suppliers
  - Specialists
  - HealthCareConnect

3. Get set-up to use the Electronic Medical Record (EMR) system

- Work with the EMR administrator to obtain an EMR account and complete needed training.
- Contact OntarioMD for support.

4. Transition the Patient Roster

- The MOHLTC Primary Care Branch will notify you of your start date with the group once the application has been processed.
- If you are in a FHN/FHO, capitation payments of the transferred roster of patients will continue for 6 months after your start date. During this time, you must make every effort to re-enroll the patients to your roster so they are included in your capitation payments after the transition period.
- Strategies to re-enroll your patients include:
  - Send a welcome letter to introduce yourself and notify your patients that they need to come into the office to register to remain patients.
  - Hire additional staff to contact and follow up with patients to ensure they come in to sign the forms.

Other Considerations

- Find a **lawyer** who can provide advice to you throughout the transition process and your career.
- Find an **accountant** to ensure your tax obligations are addressed and you are maximizing tax credits.
- Find a **financial advisor** who can help you create a strategy to pay off debt and save for your future.
- Make arrangements for adequate **insurance** coverage personally and professionally.
- Contact your preferred **bank** for a referral to services specifically for physicians/health-care professionals.
  - Arrange for financing to provide needed cash flow during the transition.
  - Set up a bank account for your practice separate from your personal bank account.
  - Seek banking advice related to financing your business.

  When looking for professional services to support you, ask colleagues for referrals to professionals who work with physicians.
- Article: ***Transferring a medical practice: legal obligations for incoming and outgoing physicians***
  https://www.oma.org/wp-content/uploads/Transferringamedicalpractice.pdf
- Review CPSO policies and requirements for **medical records**
  http://www.cpso.on.ca/Policies-Publications/Policy/Medical-Records
- Become familiar with the **Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA)**
  https://www.ipc.on.ca/health
- Become familiar with the **OHIP Schedule of Benefits and Fees**
  http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/ohip/sob/sob_mn.html
- Review the **MOHLTC Resource Manual for Physicians**
  http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/pub/ohip/physmanual/physmanual_mn.html
- For guidance on all aspects of practice management, contact the OMA
  https://www.oma.org/sections/managing-your-practice
  - Contact OMA Practice Management Advisory Services: practicemanagement@oma.org or 1-800-2687215
  - Contact OMA Legal Services: legal.affairs@oma.org or 1-800-268-7215

Professional Associations

- Ontario Medical Association (OMA): www.oma.org
- Canadian Medical Association (CMA): www.cma.ca
- Canadian Medical Protective Association (CMPA): www.cmpa-acpm.ca
- College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO): www.cpso.on.ca
- College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC): www.cfpc.ca
- Ontario College of Family Physicians (OCFP): www.ocfp.on.ca

Available in accessible format upon request: www.healthforceontario.ca/acs