

## What comes next?

Family care teams are the key to eliminating the professional silos that separate parts of the health care system. Eliminating these silos will improve care and reduce costs. Across Ontario, family care teams are introducing new tools to improve quality and accountability, and to integrate more closely with other parts of the health care system.

**To continue improving outcomes and deliver cost savings, government must renew its commitment to comprehensive family care in three ways:**



**EXPAND ACCESS:** Expanding access to interprofessional comprehensive family care to all Ontarians must be done as soon as possible. (Three of every four Ontarians do not yet have access to the benefits of this type of care.)



**ENHANCE VALUE:** Enhancing team capacity to track quality, access and total cost of care for their patients will improve program sustainability and value, enable quality improvement, and further demonstrate the benefit of family care teams to overall population health and the health system.



**ENABLE RECRUITING:** Ensuring family care teams have the funding capacity to recruit and retain skilled professionals is essential to providing high-quality comprehensive family care.

**afhto** association of family  
health teams of ontario

The Association of Family Health Teams of Ontario (AFHTO) is a not-for-profit association representing Ontario's family care teams, which includes Family Health Teams, Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinics and others who provide interprofessional comprehensive primary care. AFHTO works to support the implementation and growth of family care teams by promoting best practices, sharing lessons learned, and advocating on behalf of all family care teams. Evidence and experience shows that team-based comprehensive family care is delivering better health and better value to patients.

The Association of Family Health Teams (AFHTO)  
60 St. Clair Avenue East, Suite 800, Toronto, Ontario M4T 1N5  
647-234-8605 • [www.afhto.ca](http://www.afhto.ca)

## Ontario's Family Care Teams: Better Care. Healthier Families. Best Value.



**Family care teams bring together family physicians and other health care providers to deliver comprehensive primary care.**

**Ontario's family care teams:**

- Serve more than 206 communities throughout the province.
- Have more than 3.5 million registered patients.
- Have enrolled almost a million Ontarians who did not previously have a doctor.
- Are providing same day /next day appointments in 95% of cases.
- Are providing home visits to vulnerable patient populations in 87% of cases.

*Around the world, cost-effective and high-performing health systems share a common characteristic: they are based on a foundation of comprehensive family health care.*

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## Background

In the late 1990s, family health care was in crisis. Ontarians had poor access to family doctors, there were significant recruitment and retention challenges, and an overall fragmented approach to care delivery meant far too many patients sought primary care from hospital emergency departments.

In 2000, provincial and federal governments began to address the need to improve access to non-emergency care. As well, they committed to action that would divert patients without family physicians from using emergency rooms and walk-in clinics as a costly and less appropriate means of accessing care.

Over the last 15 years, Ontario has made significant progress building a more coordinated and comprehensive family care system to meet the needs of patients and governments.

The building blocks of this new system are interprofessional family care teams such as Family Health Teams (FHTs), Community Health Centres (CHCs), Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinics (NPLCs), and a growing number of others who combine the expertise of a range of health professionals to provide comprehensive family care. These teams provide primary care to one in four Ontarians – that's more than 3.5 million patients receiving stronger support to lead healthier lives and access appropriate care.

### Family care teams across Ontario

Today, **184** Family Health Teams, **75** Community Health Centres, **25** Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinics, and **10** Aboriginal Health Access Centres serve more than **3.5** million Ontarians in **206** communities across the province.



## Improving Outcomes

This modern approach to care is already demonstrating tremendous benefits. Preliminary data finds that patients are more satisfied, providers are finding it easier to focus on patient care, and health decision makers are seeing the benefit in being able to identify trends.

Family care teams are now participating across the province in new programs to identify our sickest patients and develop new ways to better manage their care. It is work that will help the system manage costs and ensure providers are working with better information and with the same objectives.

### Strong primary care delivers overall health

The World Health Organization has found that countries with strong primary care systems have healthier populations and are able to use health care resources more efficiently.

## Providing Value

Family care teams provide value for health dollars by diverting patients from costly emergency room visits, reducing time spent in hospitals, identifying disease earlier and promoting healthy living to focus on health prevention.

Evidence from British Columbia suggests that a very sick patient without access to high quality primary care can cost that province's system \$30,000 a year. The same patient, when aligned with a care model providing comprehensive family care, can cost just \$12,000.

### Meeting local challenges with local solutions

- In **Prince Edward County**, the local FHT created a cardiac rehab program for residents to easily access a physiotherapist, RN, dietitian, social worker and physician specialist.
- In **Kitchener**, the local FHT created a dementia clinic for patients to access family physicians, pharmacists, nurses and social workers with geriatric mental health expertise.
- In **Lambton County**, the FHT there created a mental health care team to deliver more cost-effective and collaborative care. Its success led to developing a teen suicide prevention program and an early detection program for dementia.