Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is Primary Care Network (PCN) Evolution?

PCN Evolution (originally called PCN 2.0) builds on the current strengths and successes of current PCNs, and introduces activities to improve access and delivery of primary care services to patients. One of the key initiatives is for every Albertan to have a health home anchored by a physician and supported by a multidisciplinary health team for improved access, increased services and ultimately better care.

PCN Evolution stakeholders are Alberta Health (AH), Alberta Health Services (AHS) and the Alberta Medical Association (AMA). The AMA developed a report with input from AH and AHS, outlining a 2014 PCN Evolution Vision and Framework for the future of primary health care in Alberta. This aligns with Alberta’s provincial Primary Health Care Strategy and the College of Family Physicians of Canada medical home model.

2. Why are we proceeding with the Evolution of PCNs?

The first PCNs in Alberta were formed almost a decade ago; today more than 40 operate across the province. They vary in size and scope, providing services ranging from anti-coagulation management to diabetes clinics to preventative health screening. Alberta Health, Alberta Health Services, and Alberta Medical Association stakeholders recognize that more can be done to share best PCN practices and innovations, and better align individual networks with the overall vision of a health home model.

Individual PCNs are already evolving by refining their programs, processes and accountabilities. PCN Evolution is a provincial, system-wide initiative that builds on past successes and provides a coordinated approach to continue that progress.

3. Who oversees the strategy behind implementing PCN Evolution?

The PCN Evolution Implementation Committee provides strategy oversight of PCN Evolution and includes representatives from Alberta Health, Alberta Health Services and Alberta Medical Association.

4. What does the PCN Evolution process involve?

The PCN Evolution Implementation Committee is moving forward with the process of PCN Evolution as defined by the College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC) medical home model and further developed in the PCN Evolution Vision and Framework document.
The key components of the vision for primary care are:

1. **Physician/Health Care Team/patient relationship** – A formal attachment led by the patient’s family physician and includes a multidisciplinary health team. Patient care is comprehensive, collaborative, and evidence-based to achieve accepted and measurable standards for access and quality.

2. **Primary care services** - A variety of primary care services are provided for patients (including vulnerable populations) via collaborations with Primary Care Networks (PCNs), Alberta Health Services and community-based partners. In some communities, PCNs and Family Care Clinics may link to share resources and services. Integration is enhanced by referrals to medical specialists, specialty care, secondary care and tertiary care for seamless transitions between these services.

3. **Access** - Patients are able to access primary care services the day they request them in fully enhanced PCNs. Building on current successes, PCNs establish programs to match patients without family physicians to family physicians who are taking new patients. Province-wide initiatives support Albertans with processes to find family physicians taking new patients in their communities.

4. **Governance and accountability** - Governance structures reflect the need for local oversight within a framework for collaboration and accountability in evolved PCNs. Public representatives are added to the governance framework, and health professionals have representation on some committees. Accountability measures are built into the governance model. Standards and measures are in place to evaluate the effectiveness of PCNs, and patients have opportunities to rate their satisfaction with the PCN and the health care team.

5. **Supports and enablers** - Information Management/Information Technology (IM/IT) is an essential enabler for team-based care within the PCN and links with other levels and types of care outside the PCN. All PCNs are fully automated with EMRs, which allow effective sharing of information by the health care team and allow the future flow of information from other health care partners, such as Alberta Health Services. The use of EMRs maximizes benefits to patients and the physician practice.

5. **How will PCN Evolution move toward implementation?**

Four working groups have been formed (Communications, Engaged Leadership & Community Involvement, Panel & Continuity, Enhanced Access) and are developing the tools and resources necessary to implement PCN Evolution. Each working group is comprised of matter experts and include physicians, PCN executive directors and representatives from Alberta Health, Alberta Health Services and Alberta Medical Association.
Additional working groups (Patient Experience, Quality Improvement, Integration, Team-Based Care & Design) may also be created as we continue to move forward with implementing PCN Evolution.

6. Are there opportunities to begin working on some strategies for PCN Evolution now?

The Alberta Medical Association, in consultation with Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services, has developed some tools and resources to assist PCNs in implementing the different components of PCN Evolution. Resources for panel management and governance are available and additional tools and templates are in development. You can access the tools on the Primary Care Networks Program Management Office website.

7. How can physicians and executive directors learn more about PCN Evolution and provide feedback?

Physicians are encouraged to attend presentations on PCN Evolution offered by their physician leaders or other PCN Evolution representatives at annual general meetings and other venues.

The Primary Care News — emailed to all primary care physicians province-wide and PCN executive directors — provides frequent updates on PCN Evolution. Helpful background documents, presentations, and other resources are available on the PCN Program Management Office (PMO) website.

Physicians can also submit their questions, comments or needs for support to pcnevolution@albertadoctors.org or can call the PCN PMO at 1.866.714.5724.

Learn more about PCN Evolution

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