Transforming the Referral Experience in Ontario

Ontario Health

BACKGROUND

Ontario Health is advancing efforts to make the referral process more efficient and coordinated across the province through initiatives such as eReferral and Central Intake. These digital health tools support providers in connecting patients to the right care faster, reducing administrative burden and improving communication between primary care and specialists.

The Patients Before Paperwork (Pb4P) initiative, which is being led by Ontario Health and the Ministry of Health, is driving the adoption of eReferral Ontario and Central Intake technology to reduce administrative burden, improve care coordination and give patients faster, more equitable access to the right care. These tools streamline referrals, enhance wait time visibility and build a more connected, digital health system for clinicians and patients.

To date, eReferral has processed over two million referrals in Ontario with approximately 87 per cent of patients reporting satisfaction with their experience. Central Intake and Coordinated Access, paired with eReferral, gives clinicians a single, electronic point of entry to request specialty care, diagnostic imaging, mental health and addictions, and other services. eReferral simplifies referral management, reduces wait times and helps match patients to the most appropriate clinician based on their needs and preferences.

The adoption of eReferral and Central Intake/Coordinated Access aligns with Ontario's broader health system priorities, including the *Digital First for Health Strategy* and *Your Health: A Plan for Connected and Convenient Care.* These initiatives support integrated, patient-centred care, enhance system efficiency and help clinicians spend more time with patients rather than on administrative tasks.

All clinicians and providers across the province can onboard to eReferral Ontario by completing an Onboarding Request Form. If you're interested in eReferral Ontario but need more information before deciding to onboard, please complete an Expression of Interest (EOI) form. After you submit the form, a representative will contact you to provide the information you need.

Ontario Health continues to collaborate with hospitals, primary care providers, allied health professionals and regional partners to expand digital referral solutions and support coordinated, patient-centred care across the province.

ABOUT EREFERRAL ONTARIO

What is eReferral Ontario?

eReferral Ontario is a provincial digital platform launched by Ontario Health in August 2025 to manage referrals electronically, reduce administrative burden and streamline communication between health care providers. By replacing paper-based processes with a secure, integrated digital system, eReferral Ontario enhances efficiency, improves tracking and transparency, and supports a better referral experience for both providers and patients.

What are the benefits of eReferral over fax?

eReferral Ontario is faster, more secure, and easier to track than fax. Referrals are sent electronically within seconds, with automatic confirmation of receipt and real-time status updates that help reduce delays, prevent lost referrals and shorten turnaround time. It protects patient information through strong privacy and security standards, reduces errors from incomplete or illegible forms, making the overall referral process more reliable, transparent and efficient for both sending and receiving providers.

What are the benefits of eReferral for primary care?

Thousands of primary care clinicians are already using eReferral. Increasing specialist adoption and improving data quality in referral management systems are key goals to expand the network of receiving clinicians and make referrals easier. eReferral reduces paperwork and administrative burden, giving primary care clinicians more time to focus on patient care through a coordinated approach to referrals. By integrating eReferral with Central Intake, primary care clinicians can send referrals to Central Intake Hubs, where they are matched to appropriate providers based on clinical need and wait times.

What are the benefits of eReferral for specialists?

Specialists who use eReferral have the opportunity to improve care coordination across Ontario's health system and join the thousands of clinicians already benefiting from the platform. eReferral supports efficient triaging by providing the clinical details needed to assess the urgency of patient care requests. It may also support better caseload management, helping specialists prioritize high-risk patients and create a smoother referral experience for both clinicians and patients.

eReferral reduces inappropriate referrals, wait times, and staff workload.

By participating in eReferral, specialists help primary care and other clinicians collaborate more effectively, fostering a more seamless experience for patients. Using these digital health tools also allows specialists to help shape a system that works for their community and supports continuity of care.

Why is Ontario expanding access to eReferral?

Thousands of clinicians are already sending eReferrals across the province. To date, eReferral has processed over [two million referrals in Ontario](#) with approximately 87% of patients reporting satisfaction with their experience.

With a plan to provide sustainable funding, Ontario is expanding access to eReferral through a new provincial platform, eReferral Ontario, available to all eligible health care providers to make the referral process simpler and more efficient for clinicians and patients. eReferral Ontario allows clinicians and allied health providers to send and manage referrals digitally, reducing paperwork, streamlining communication and improving the referral experience.

In the future, eReferral will be paired with a provincial Central Intake system. Central Intake will provide a single point of entry for primary care clinicians, specialists and allied health teams to request specialty care, surgery, diagnostic imaging and other services. This approach improves transparency, enhances wait time visibility, reduces administrative workload and gives patients timely, equitable access to the right care based on their preferences.

Who is the vendor for eReferral Ontario?

Ontario Health conducted a competitive procurement process to evaluate vendors against provincial requirements including security, privacy, workflow integration and scalability. The successful vendor, OceanMD, was selected based on its ability to meet these standards and support province-wide implementation.

Is eReferral a secure digital health tool?

Yes, eReferral Ontario is a secure digital health tool that protects patient information throughout the referral process. It uses encryption and other advanced safeguards to ensure referrals are sent directly and securely between providers, offering greater protection than traditional fax.

The system is designed in compliance with Ontario's *Personal Health Information Protection Act* (PHIPA) and other applicable privacy and security standards. For more information, please visit our [privacy page](#).

How does eReferral Ontario leverage the Primary Care Coordination Gateway?

The Provincial Care Coordination Gateway (PCCG) is owned and operated by Ontario Health. It allows different health care IT applications to work together, even if different companies operate them. Access to the PCCG is free for eligible health care providers in Ontario and supports a more connected, coordinated and efficient health care system.

Currently, eReferral is the first health care IT application to be connected to the PCCG. Over time, more health care IT applications will make use of the PCCG.

What is the timeline for expanding access to eReferral in Ontario?

Onboarding to eReferral Ontario began with a limited launch to select groups in early August 2025. Those included in the limited launch received an email invitation to onboard from their regional deployment team. The purpose of the limited launch was to test the tool and gather user insights to ensure the tool and related processes met users' needs.

With this phase now complete, onboarding is now open to all clinicians and providers. Review our eligibility requirements to see which provider groups are eligible to join.

Is there a financial cost to use eReferral Ontario?

No. eReferral Ontario is funded by the province and is available to clinicians at no cost.

How do Regional Deployment Teams support the adoption of eReferral Ontario?

Regional deployment teams (RDTs) are local teams in each Ontario Health region that support the rollout of digital health tools, including eReferral.

Their role includes:
- Onboarding and training providers to use eReferral
- Providing change management and troubleshooting support
- Customizing adoption to fit local referral pathways
- Tracking usage and sharing data with the province
- Serving as the main communication link between providers and Ontario Health

How can Ontario Health Teams and Primary Care Networks support the adoption of eReferral Ontario?

Ontario Health Teams (OHTs) and Primary Care Networks (PCNs) play a key role in advancing eReferral adoption in their regions.

In fiscal year 2025/26, they will support the Pb4P strategy by facilitating eReferral adoption and reporting on progress. OHTs and PCNs collaborate with Ontario Health regional teams to promote adoption through targeted communications, championing eReferral and fostering connections between primary care clinicians and deployment teams.

What is a Local Delivery Group and what is their role in eReferral Ontario?

In 2023, Ontario Health created 10 Local Delivery Groups (LDGs) to act as regional leads for digital implementation. Each LDG has a Lead Organization that works with Ontario Health to coordinate priorities across hospitals and other health service providers. LDGs first focused on shared cybersecurity services, which helped establish a strong foundation for more coordinated digital planning.

Their role is now expanding to support key elements of Pb4P, starting with eReferral Ontario. LDG Lead Organizations are responsible for the onboarding of hospital-based specialists to eReferral Ontario, beginning with their own facilities this fiscal year, and working with partner organization within their LDG in 2026/27. They will also develop fit-for-purpose governance models, support providers through onboarding and adoption and ensure alignment with provincial standards.

To learn more about which organizations have been designated as LDG Lead Organizations, please read our [operational direction from October 2025](#).

How can sites confirm their interest in onboarding to eReferral Ontario?

To start the onboarding process for eReferral Ontario, users must submit an [Onboarding Request Form](#) (ORF). Before you fill out the ORF, we suggest reviewing the [ORF Job Aid](#) to ensure you know what type of information is required to complete the form. Please note that submitting the ORF confirms your commitment to onboard to eReferral Ontario. Once submitted, a representative will review and assess the information provided in the ORF and follow up with next steps.

If you're interested in eReferral Ontario but would like more information before deciding to onboard, please complete an [Expression of Interest (EOI) form](#). A representative will contact you to provide the details you need to make your decision.

Where can I learn more about eReferral Ontario?

To learn more about eReferral Ontario, please visit our [website](#).

STANDARDIZED EREFERRAL FORMS

What is a Standardized eReferral Form (SRF)?

Standardized eReferral Forms (SRF) are digital referral forms and a key part of Ontario's Patients Before Paperwork (Pb4P) initiative. They aim to reduce administrative burden and improve patient care. By replacing traditional paper-based referral forms, SRFs ensure consistency and uniformity in the information collected during referrals.

SRFs include the right amount of clinical detail to support timely care without overwhelming clinicians. By streamlining and standardizing both the content and structure of referral forms, SRF improves the clinician experience, supports better communication between providers, enhances privacy by eliminating faxing and assists with health system planning. Other benefits include faster and safer referrals and reduced clinician burnout.

Why are we replacing the current eReferral forms?

Ontario currently has an estimated 1,400 eReferral forms that can create challenges and bottlenecks for both patients and clinicians throughout the referral process. Implementing SRFs addresses this

complexity by streamlining referral intake. Patients, the ultimate recipients of this change, benefit from referrals that are more rapidly and appropriately triaged, supporting a smoother and more efficient clinical care journey.

Why are SRFs being developed?

Standardized Referral Forms (SRFs) are being developed to improve access, safety, and efficiency across the healthcare system. By ensuring that every SRF includes the same core clinical information, these forms reduce incomplete or inaccurate submissions, support consistent and equitable triage, and prevent avoidable delays in care.

In addition, SRFs strengthen communication between clinicians, improve continuity of care and align with existing digital health tools and portals. By enhancing privacy and reducing clinician burnout, SRFs contribute to delivering world-class health care.

How were the SRFs created and who helped to inform them?

The SRF development process is clinically led and involves a preliminary review with primary care clinicians, specialists, the Ontario Medical Association (OMA) and relevant specialty associations. Non-clinical components of SRFs are reviewed by Indigenous and equity representatives, Ontario Health's quality, digital health standards, user experience and customer experience teams and patient partners. Each form undergoes an open clinical review where the forms are broadly disseminated and clinicians, allied health providers, administrators and external clinical organizations across the province can provide their feedback.

User feedback has been incorporated to ensure the forms collect all necessary information while minimizing additional administrative burden.

Which SRFs have been developed to date?

SRFs are being implemented in phases, with the goal of creating a form for every specialty. The chart below shows which forms are currently available and which are in development for future use.

Phase	Status	Clinical Specialty Included	Completion
Phase 1A	Live	Dermatology, Gastroenterology, Hematology, Nephrology, Neurology, Obstetrics and Gynecology, Otolaryngology, Respirology, Rheumatology, Urology, Cardiology, Universal Form	August 2025
Phase 1B	Live	Cataract, Orthopedics, Medical Imaging (including Ultrasound, Radiology, Bone Mineral Density, Computed Tomography (CT), Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI))	October 2025

Phase 2	Underway	Mental Health and Addictions Coordinated Access, Psychiatry, Endocrinology, Infectious Disease, Plastic Surgery and Bariatrics	December 2025
Phase 3	Planning	General Pediatrics, General Surgery, General Internal Medicine, Sickle Cell, Vascular Surgery, Neurosurgery, Geriatrics, Diagnostic Assessment Centres (BEACON)	March 2025

How does eReferral Ontario work with SRFs?

Users of eReferral Ontario can access the SRFs through their forms library on Ocean.

Can SRFs be printed and faxed?

No – the SRFs are dynamic forms designed for use within the eReferral platform and are not intended to be printed or faxed (paper-based or eFax).

How do I give feedback on clinical content within the SRF?

You can provide feedback by emailing OH-Central_DigitalVirtual@ontariohealth.ca or directly via the feedback link embedded in each SRF. All feedback is collected and reviewed during quarterly governance meetings.

How can I raise a concern if the SRF doesn't meet my site's clinical needs?

If a SRF does not meet your site's clinical needs, raise the concern with your regional deployment team. They will work with the SRF project team to review the issue, assess the clinical rationale and determine whether an exception or revision is required.

PROVINCIAL HEALTH SERVICES DIRECTORY

What is the Provincial Health Services Directory (PHSD)?

The PHSD is an evolving directory of health care services, providers and organizations in Ontario. Managed and delivered by Ontario Health, it aims to support system navigation for patients and providers by offering accurate and up-to-date information as it continues to grow.

The PHSD is not a standalone directory and cannot be accessed directly. Instead, it serves as a centralized data repository designed to integrate with various approved digital health tools.

What data sources are included in the PHSD?

The PHSD brings together data from several trusted sources, including:

- TheHealthline.ca/Ontario Health atHome – Provides information about health services, programs, and emergency care options available across Ontario, including locations and contact details. It also includes details on service types and eligibility criteria.
- ConnexOntario – Offers listings of mental health and addiction services, including crisis intervention, counselling and treatment programs. Information about service types and eligibility is also included.
- The Provincial Provider Registry – Shares information about registered health care providers from 13 Ontario health regulatory colleges, including:
  - College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO)
  - College of Nurses of Ontario (CNO)
  - College of Dietitians of Ontario (CDO)
  - Ontario College of Pharmacists (OCP)
  - College of Midwives of Ontario (CMO)
  - Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario (RCDSO)
  - College of Psychologists of Ontario (CPO)
  - College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario (CASLPO)
  - College of Denturists of Ontario (CDO)
  - College of Medical Radiation and Imaging Technologists of Ontario (CMRITO)
  - College of Massage Therapists of Ontario (CMTO)
  - College of Respiratory Therapists of Ontario (CRTO)
  - College of Dental Hygienists of Ontario (CDHO)

How does the PHSD ensure data accuracy?

The PHSD regularly updates its data from trusted sources to ensure that information about health care services, providers and organizations remains current and accurate. For example, data from the Provincial Provider Registry and eReferral Ontario are considered authoritative sources. eReferral vendors receive physician data directly from the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO), which is maintained by its members. Physicians can also update their own profiles within eReferral.

Other data sources, such as ConnexOntario and TheHealthline/Ontario Health atHome, have established processes for manually updating service provider profiles to maintain accuracy and reliability.