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# Family Health Teams

*Advancing Primary Health Care*

# Guide to Information Technology

October 12, 2005

## **Purpose**

This guide, one in a series of guides developed to assist groups intending to form Family Health Teams, provides basic information on funding for physician information technology (IT) and an overview of the Physician IT Program.

There are two components to IT funding for Family Health Teams:

1. Physician IT Program, developed jointly by the Ontario Medical Association (OMA) and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
2. Support for non-physician interdisciplinary providers

The information in this document is intended only as a guide. Groups should consider obtaining independent advice as necessary.

For more information on Family Health Teams, please refer to the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care website at [http://www.health.gov.on.ca/transformation/fht/fht\\_mn.html](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/transformation/fht/fht_mn.html)

## **Background**

In 2000, an investment fund of \$150 million was established for information technology to support physicians participating in primary care models. Family Health Team physicians are eligible to access this funding. Demonstrated benefits of information technology that support the improvement of primary care services and access include:

- Improved accuracy and effectiveness in prescribing tests and medication.
- Better availability and faster retrieval of individual patient clinical information.
- Accurate and timely exchange of patient information among health care providers.
- Development and delivery of prevention strategies and educational material to patients.
- General practice research/effectiveness information for planning.
- Professional development through on-line learning, on-line access to current information sources, and physician-to-physician communication.

Working with physicians, the OMA and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (the ministry) created the Physician IT Program, a comprehensive program that assists physicians in the acquisition, implementation and adoption of information technology. The government has entrusted the delivery and management of the Physician IT Program to the OMA. The OMA has created OMA e-Services Inc. to provide the Physician IT Program to physicians.

## **Physician Transition Support Program**

The Transition Support Program supports physicians and their staff in selecting and implementing the right information technology for their offices. Through self-help tools like checklists, workshops, and planning guides, the Transition Support Program will help physicians optimize their use of information technology.

Transition Support Specialists are also available to physicians participating in approved primary health care groups, like Family Health Teams, to provide them with direct assistance in acquiring, implementing and using information technology.

## **OntarioMD.ca**

OntarioMD.ca is a free internet portal for Ontario physicians. OntarioMD.ca will provide access to information that is important to physicians including medical journals, critical health alerts, on-line Continuing Medical Education, and a drug database.

## **Approved Clinical Management System Products**

The Physician IT Program has approved 14 Clinical Management System (CMS) products that fully integrate electronic medical records, billing and scheduling requirements. Each approved Clinical Management System product meets detailed technical, privacy, security and user specifications developed by physicians.

The approved Clinical Management Systems include 13 Local Solution products and one Application Service Provider product. Local Solution CMS products reside directly in a physician's office or in another physician's office within their group or in a hospital data centre.

The Application Service Provider CMS product is accessed by physicians in their office but resides remotely at the Smart Systems for Health Agency secure data centre that provides physicians with secure access to their data 24/7 via a secure network connection with full back-up and support.

Information on approved CMS products is available on OntarioMD.ca and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care website (under Health Care Providers/Projects and Programs).

## **Secure E-mail**

The Smart Systems for Health Agency will provide every physician in Ontario with Secure E-mail for Health allowing secure and private doctor-to-doctor communication and securely connect physicians and other health care providers to the broader health care sector.

## **Primary Care IT Funding Plan**

To help physicians acquire and implement information technology, a Physician IT Funding Plan is available to eligible primary care physicians. The Physician IT Funding Plan provides physicians with a financial subsidy to make information technology more affordable.

Each eligible physician that acquires an approved Clinical Management System may apply for:

- A one-time \$4500 readiness grant
- A \$600 per month acquisition subsidy for 36 months
- A one-time \$2500 performance bonus

## **Other Health Care Providers**

Funding for information technology for other health care providers working in Family Health Teams can be requested through the submission of the Team's Business and Operational Plan. Please refer to the Guide to Business and Operational Plan Development.

**For more information on the Physician IT Program contact a Transition Support Specialist at 1-866-744-8663.**

## Where to Get More Information

All potential Family Health Teams will be assigned a ministry Family Health Team coordinator. This ministry contact person will be your guide to assist you to work through the details and options of establishing a Family Health Team.

If you have not yet been assigned a coordinator, please contact the ministry at:

E-mail: FHTinquiry@moh.gov.on.ca  
Address: Primary Health Care Team  
Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care  
1075 Bay Street, 9<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Toronto, ON M5S 2B1  
Telephone: 416-212-6155  
Toll Free Phone: 1-866-766-0266

For more information on Family Health Teams in general, please refer to the Family Health Team Fact Sheets or the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care website at: [http://www.health.gov.on.ca/transformation/fht/fht\\_mn.html](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/transformation/fht/fht_mn.html)