What is a Health Network?

Health Networks connect teams of health care professionals and community partners to better meet the needs of the people they serve. Health care professionals who play an important role on a team include physicians, nurses, pharmacists, physiotherapists, dietitians, mental health counsellors, social workers, and others.

Health Networks allow the Saskatchewan Health Authority to better organize services and resources internally to deliver more reliable and consistent team-based care as close to home as possible. Health services within networks will be adapted to the needs of individuals and communities. For example, populations showing greater incidence of certain chronic conditions such as COPD or diabetes could have enhanced provider and program support in their network. This can help in reducing unnecessary visits to Emergency Rooms, reduced hospitalizations and more appropriate access to care for all. Reduction in the number of unnecessary ER visits also translates into shorter waits for users who do need to access an ER, and reductions in ER revisits, as care is provided in the network setting.

What prompted the creation of Health Networks?

Saskatchewan's heath system partners are always working toward the shared goal of improving health care in Saskatchewan to deliver the best possible service to our patients.

In 2016, a Saskatchewan Advisory Panel was created by the Government of Saskatchewan to review how our provincial health system was organized and structured. After detailed public consultation by Panel representatives, a key recommendation was to enhance team-based primary health care across the province.

The Ministry of Health, Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA) and Saskatchewan Medical Association (SMA) came together to find solutions on how to achieve this important recommendation and find the most effective path forward.

What important information did we hear?

Patients told us it was important to receive health care as close to their home community as possible. Health care workers said they would feel more supported by working together as teams. As well, the health care system needs to reduce reliance on emergency room care through proactive measures to help patients manage urgent and chronic diseases.

With multiple priorities to consider, it was determined that improving how health care services and resources are organized locally was the first positive step to success. This led to the creation of Health Networks across the province as the most effective approach.

What will Health Networks do?

Health Networks allow us to better organize services and resources to deliver more reliable and consistent care, tailored to the needs of individuals and communities. They will facilitate patient access to team-based care, including physicians and other providers, as close to home as possible.

Knowledge is key to effective health care delivery. Important data will be provided to local health care teams, including demographics or age groups and prevalence of certain diseases or conditions, to ensure services offered within each network reflect the needs of the communities they serve.

Network development is in the early stages and this work will continue to evolve as we move forward to create a better health system for Saskatchewan people.

Is there an action patients or the general public should take?

No. Health Networks are for internal use only to better organize services and support health providers to deliver care where you live. Patients do not need to know which network they belong to in order to receive appropriate care, and will have the flexibility to move between networks depending on their health care needs.

The Saskatchewan Health Authority will work with physician practices and local communities to create linkages so that care is coordinated and easy to access.