

# Ontario Announces 13 New Ontario Health Teams

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## New approach will improve patient outcomes and support Ontario's response to COVID-19

TORONTO — The Ontario government is providing \$2.4 million to support an additional 13 Ontario Health Teams across the province to provide better, connected care to patients. These teams are a new way of delivering care that brings together health care providers and organizations to work as one coordinated team to improve patient outcomes. This new collaborative model is helping the province respond more quickly and effectively to COVID-19 and end hallway health care.

Details were provided today by Premier Doug Ford, Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health and Merrilee Fullerton, Minister of Long-Term Care.

"Today's investment will not only help our province respond more effectively to the current global pandemic, but it will also help us end hallway healthcare and build a better, patient-focused health care system for the future," said Premier Ford. "While these new teams will provide better support for more Ontarians, we won't stop until every person and every community in Ontario has access to this new improved model of care."

Through an Ontario Health Team, patients will experience easier transitions from one provider to another, including, for example, between hospitals, home care providers or long-term care homes, with one patient story, one patient record and one care plan. As Ontario Health Teams are established, patients and families will also have access to 24/7 navigation and care coordination services. This includes enabling the further expansion of virtual care for patients through dedicated funding to maintain access to care during the COVID-19 pandemic. With the addition of 13 new Ontario Health Teams, the province now has a total of 42 teams which will cover over 86 per cent of the province's population at maturity.

"While still in its early stages, Ontario Health Teams are already breaking down long-standing barriers to better connect care for both patients and our frontline heroes," said Minister Elliott. "These teams have demonstrated remarkable responsiveness to the COVID-19 outbreak by helping to address challenges in a variety of areas, and they are essential to building a connected health care system centred around the needs of patients."

The strong partnerships and integrated care established by Ontario Health Teams and Ontario Health have helped better position the province to respond quickly and effectively to COVID-19. This includes supporting long-term care homes, simplifying the purchase of personal protective equipment, helping establish assessment centres, launching virtual urgent care initiatives, and expanding remote patient monitoring programs to support COVID-19 patients and other vulnerable populations.

The Ontario Health Team model has already proven how a collaborative team can support each other in times of need such as when there is a significant outbreak at a long-term care home. These teams were able to come together and respond quickly to address staffing shortages; infection, protection and control measures; and support keeping residents and staff safe during COVID-19. These stronger partnerships between hospitals, primary care, home and community care and long-term care homes will create a connected health care system that focuses on the needs of patients and is a key recommendation by the Long-Term Care COVID-19 Commission.

"COVID-19 has highlighted the importance of continuous learning: the more we learn, the better we can protect ourselves, including our residents in long-term care," said Minister Fullerton. "The coordination of care through Ontario Health Teams is a significant collaborative initiative that supports our commitment to modernizing long-term care in Ontario."

Ontario Health Teams will help maintain hospital capacity by coordinating programs that link hospitals, primary care, home and community care services, long-term care homes, congregate settings, and other services, as well as supporting virtual care, online appointment booking and patients' digital access to their health information. It will also support the participation of patients, families and caregivers in Ontario Health Team's planning, decision-making and expanding the involvement of primary care and family medicine.

Betty-Lou Kristy, the Chair of the Minister's Patient and Family Advisory Council, assisted in the review process for selecting the new Ontario Health Teams and will provide ongoing advice to all teams. Meaningful engagement and partnership with patients, families and caregivers is a key requirement for Ontario Health Teams to ensure they achieve the goal of improving the way that Ontarians experience the health care system.

"As the health system changes and evolves, it is critical that new approaches to health care focus on what patients really need," said Ms. Kristy. "Ontario Health Teams can be part of the solution and improve how patients are treated throughout their health care journey. I look forward to supporting these teams to build a connected system centred on patients, their families and caregivers."

The Ontario government will continue working with its healthcare partners to establish Ontario Health Teams across the province and ensure everyone is supported by a team.

To further protect long-term care home residents, staff and visitors, the Ontario government is also updating testing guidance in communities with greater transmission of COVID-19. Starting next week, in long-term care homes in public health unit regions in the Orange-Restrict, Red-Control and Lockdown levels under the COVID-19 Response Framework, the following changes will be made:

- Staff, essential caregivers and support workers who provide direct care to residents need to be tested for COVID-19 weekly and show proof of a negative test result.
- Support workers who do not provide direct care to residents must verbally attest to having received a negative COVID-19 test result in the past two weeks and not subsequently tested positive.

For long-term care homes in regions at the Green-Prevent and Yellow-Protect levels, testing will continue every two weeks for staff, volunteers, caregivers and visitors.

## **QUICK FACTS**

- An Ontario Health Team is responsible for delivering care for their patients, understanding their health care history, easing their transition from one provider to another, directly connecting them to the different types of care they need and providing 24/7 help in navigating the health care system.
- Ontario is investing approximately \$28 million to directly support the 42 teams in fiscal year 2020-2021.

Under an Ontario Health Team, Ontarians can be confident that they can continue to contact their health care providers as they always have, to access the health care they need. The Ontario government will continue working with its health care partners until Ontario Health Teams are fully established across the province and everyone is supported by a team.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Visit Ontario's [website](#) to learn more about how the province continues to protect Ontarians from COVID-19.
- Learn more about [Ontario Health Teams](#).

Learn more about [Ontario Health](#).

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