

Memorandum

TO: Zone Executive Directors and Medical Executive Directors
Primary Health Care Directors / Health Services Managers
Zone Chiefs of Surgery, Family Practice and Radiology
Primary care providers, surgeons, and diagnostic imaging team members

FROM: Dr. Nicole Boutilier, Vice President, Medicine, Nova Scotia Health
Grayson Fulmer, Senior Director, Medical Affairs
Dr. Greg Hirsch, Senior Medical Director, Perioperative Services Network
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DATE: December 6, 2023

RE: **Use of eReferrals mandatory for primary care providers and surgeons April 1, 2024**

Using electronic referrals to improve access to care is a priority within government's Action for Health Plan and has been adopted as Nova Scotia's standard for managing and coordinating referrals for surgical consults and diagnostic imaging (DI) services. **Following a period of transition and enhancements for primary care providers and surgeons, we are now further expanding user supports and making eReferrals use mandatory effective April 1, 2024.**

Efforts to support primary care and surgeon offices to join eReferrals began last fall and this deadline for mandatory use will come a full year from the surgical eReferrals launch. We have since expanded the tool to include eReferrals for MRIs and ultrasounds, and planning continues to allow CT scan eReferrals next year.

Our expectation is that surgeons, primary care providers and DI team members who have onboarded and completed training are now using eReferrals to manage and coordinate referrals for surgical consults and the diagnostic imaging services available through the tool.

Benefits

Electronic referrals offer many benefits for patients, providers, and the health system, including:

- referrals can be tracked, helping prevent, lost, incomplete or misdirected referrals.
- standardized referral forms capture details required to prioritize requests.
- referrals can be sent to surgery central intake / DI provincial queues -- saving referrers time researching options and helping direct patients to options matching their needs and preferences.
- provider-to-provider communication and communication with patients are improved, with improved visibility into the status of their referrals -- saving time following up on requests for updates.

Enhancements for users

Since launching eReferrals we have been listening and learning from healthcare providers and their teams, to make ongoing enhancements to the tool, its integration with EMRs and workflows. These efforts continue, with additional enhancements coming this month. Information on enhancements to date can be found [here](#).

Direct, in-person support available

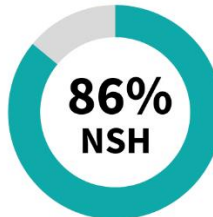
Direct supports to help clinicians and their staff begin using eReferrals, have been well received, increasing users' comfort with the tool. We have expanded these resources to ensure team members can continue travelling to clinics and offices across the province in the weeks ahead.

We strongly encourage all primary care and surgeon offices to sign-up to receive these supports before March 31 and that you begin using eReferrals as soon as this training is complete. If you have not completed the onboarding process, or would like to schedule support, please submit a request now: www.referralsns.ca/ask.

Further information and resources can be found on our [Nova Scotia eReferral Resource Hub](#).

We are seeing steady increases in referral activity and for the first-time gaining insight into referrals and patient preferences, to support planning and access to care. We will continue to work to optimize eReferrals and to support its use, to realize the full benefits expected for providers, patients, and our system.

Surgeons set up to receive eReferrals



10,712 surgical eReferrals since March 31
~70% directed to central intake teams

890 MRI eReferrals since Sept. 27
from 254 referrers across 8 sites

Primary Care Providers (PCPs)

