

eReferral Repository

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Ontario Health Central Waitlist
Management eReferral Repository -
Ontario eServices Program

Clinician FAQ – eReferral Repository

The eReferral Repository Project

1. *Q. What is the Ontario Health (OH) eReferral Repository?*

A. The eReferral Repository is a new provincial Repository which has been created by Ontario Health to better support patients and caregivers through their health care journey. As part of this initiative, eReferral data initiated through Ocean will be collected and securely stored in the Repository.

2. *Q. Why do we need an eReferral Repository?*

A. The eReferral Repository will eventually store data from multiple sources. The data collected will help to inform health system planning and ultimately improve patients' access to care and the overall patient experience.

3. *Q. When does this come into effect?*

A. The goal is to have data start to flow into the eReferral Repository before March 31, 2023. Data will be collected incrementally as the number of Health Information Custodians (HICs) agreeing to data sharing increases.

4. *Q. What are the benefits?*

A. The Repository data provides a window into the benefits of eReferral and enables health system planners to continue to proactively plan to address the evolving health service needs of Ontarians. Personal Health Information (PHI) is being collected to:

- enhance visibility into provincial service demand;
- inform and facilitate active load management; and
- support coordinated patient flow.

The establishment of a provincial Repository is aligned with the province's commitment and plan to **address the wait times for accessing specialist** services.

5. *Q. Does this new Repository change how I currently send or receive eReferrals?*

A. No, you will continue to send and/or receive eReferrals the same way you always have. Neither the Repository itself, nor the contribution of data to it, require you to change anything you do today to send and/or receive eReferrals. Contributing data to the Repository happens in the 'back-end' and does not impact your current eReferral workflow(s).

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Patient Communication

6. *Q. Who is responsible for letting the patients know?*

A. Disclosure by a Health Information Custodian (HIC) to a Prescribed Entity (Ontario Health is a Prescribed Entity under PHIPA) is permitted **without** patient consent. Please follow your existing process for communicating with your patients about the sharing of their data.

7. *Q. What happens if one of my patients doesn't want their PHI in the Repository?*

A. If a patient has explicitly stated that they do not want their PHI shared, the only way to ensure their data is not contributed is to not send the referral using eReferral.

Next Steps for Clinicians

8. *Q. As a clinician, what do I have to do?*

A. As an Ontario eServices Program eReferral (Ocean eReferral) participant, you'll need to:

- sign an amendment to the existing Health Information Network Provider (HINP) Agreement. Note: The amending agreement will come to you, or your signing authority, via email from DocuSign (an electronic signature and agreement platform) and will include the data sharing agreement as a reference.
- Once the amendment has been signed, you'll be prompted to enable the data flow in the Admin area of your Ocean site to trigger the data sharing. For detailed instructions, visit [eReferral Repository - eHealth Centre of Excellence](#).

9. *Q. When do I have to return the signed Amending Agreement?*

A. Return of the signed Amending Agreement is requested immediately. The eReferral Repository will begin collecting data before March 31, 2023.

10. *Q. If I decide I no longer want to share my data, can I change my mind after I've signed the Amending Agreement?*

A. If you'd like to change your data sharing preference, email the Ontario eServices Program team at eReferral@ehealthce.ca.

11. *Q. If I don't sign the Amending Agreement, can I still use eReferral?*

A. Yes, at this time you can continue to use eReferral whether you decide to contribute to the Repository or not. Eventually, as a participant in the eReferral network, data sharing will not be optional.

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12. Q. *I'm an eReferral participant, but not a HIC; how does this affect me?*

A. Data flow into the eReferral Repository is determined by the receiver, not the sender. Once a receiving site (HICs only) agrees to contribute data to the Repository, the eReferral data will flow regardless of who the sender is.

If you are a HIC or a non-HIC sending a referral to a non-HIC, your data **will not be contributed** to the Repository.

Contributing Data to the Repository

13. Q. *What happens if I do not want to share my data?*

A. Data will only be contributed to the eReferral Repository if the receiving site is a Health Information Custodian (HIC) and is willing to share the data. There is no impact to the eReferral process if data is not contributed to the Repository.

14. Q. *What happens to data in the Repository if a referral is cancelled?*

A. The referral record will show as “cancelled” but the data for that referral will remain in the Repository.

15. Q. *What happens to the data if I send an eReferral and the Receiver (Specialist) chooses to respond with an eConsult instead?*

A. Information will be sent to the Repository incrementally throughout the lifecycle of the referral request. In this case, only part of the eReferral data (the data pertaining to the eReferral) would be collected by the Repository.

The Data, Its Use and Security

16. Q. *What is a Data Repository*

A. A Data Repository (Repository) is a virtual storage area where data sets are filed and sorted so they can be accessed by authorized personnel.

16. Q. *What data will go into the Repository?*

A. The eReferral data being collected for the eReferral Repository can be accessed here: [eReferral Repository – eHealth Centre of Excellence](#). **Note:** It does include personal health information (PHI).

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17. Q. *Is Ontario Health authorized to collect this information?*

A. Under the Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA), 2004, Ontario Health (OH) is a Prescribed Entity and is authorized to collect, use, and disclose personal information or personal health information from Health Information Custodians (HICs). Ontario Health is permitted to do this for specific reasons described by law. **Note:** Ontario Health, as a Prescribed Entity, is not permitted to collect data from non-HIC participants.

18. Q. *As a clinician, am I permitted to disclose this data to Ontario Health under PHIPA?*

A: Yes. A disclosure of Personal Health Information (PHI) by a Health Information Custodian (HIC) to Ontario Health as a Prescribed Entity is permitted under Section 45 of PHIPA.

19. Q. *Is it mandatory to contribute data to the Repository?*

A. No, not at this time. While contribution is discretionary under PHIPA, it is strongly encouraged. The ability for the eReferral Repository to support meaningful system planning is contingent upon participation from clinicians across the province.

20. Q. *Is the data collection retrospective?*

A. No, data will not be collected retrospectively.

21. Q. *What will Ontario Health do with the data?*

A. Authorized personnel at Ontario Health will use this data to support health system performance and reporting. The goal is that it will help to inform decisions that will ultimately lead to improvements in the healthcare system. Specifically, the overall goals of the Repository are to:

- enhance visibility into service demand,
- inform and facilitate active load management, and
- support health system planning.

Note: These purposes are in alignment with those permitted under PHIPA s. 45(1).

22. Q. *Who has access to the data in the Repository?*

A. Authorized health system administrators and planners at Ontario Health will have access to the data.

23. Q. *How do I know the data is secure?*

A: Ontario Health has provided a [Security Assurance document](#) that can be found on the eHealth Centre of Excellence website: [eReferral Repository - eHealth Centre of Excellence](#). In addition, a Threat Risk Assessment (TRA) has been conducted on the eReferral Repository. For more information on the results of the TRA, contact Ontario Health at cwm@ontariohealth.ca.

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24. Q. As a clinician, will my patients or I be able to access the data in the Repository?

A. As part of Ontario Health’s strategic direction, OH’s data assets will eventually be used to feed other clinician and patient-facing data sources (i.e., patient portals).

25. Q. Will the data be used for research?

A. Ontario Health (OH) does not currently have any plans to use the eReferral data for research purposes. Generally speaking, data requests for research, health system planning or for other government organizations purposes are first submitted through a data request process via the Ontario Health Data Disclosure Team. The Data Disclosure Team will initially assess the third party’s data request and intended use of the data.