

TIMELY ACCESS TO SPECIALTY CARE (eReferrals)

DEFINITION: The number of physician specialty services implemented with eReferral Advice Request.

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT: When Advice Request is enabled within eReferral, a referring provider can send a request asking for guidance on a non-urgent clinical question. Advice Requests allow the specialty service to reply back to the request within five calendar days. The advice provided may suggest a referral be submitted or provide guidance for ongoing management of the patient's condition. Having more specialists providing advice for non-urgent questions and being able to do so in an electronic format may provide patients with care sooner, prevent them from waiting for an appointment they don't need, and support them better while they are waiting for an appointment.

Over the three-year term of the 2017-2020 Health Plan, AHS successfully implemented eReferral in 22 specialty areas. While we did not achieve the three-year combined target of 45 specialties due to funding constraints and limited stakeholder readiness, ongoing work is now focused on the Alberta Surgical Initiative. This will include alignment with centralized intake processes and Connect Care, where possible.

Number of Specialty Services Added to eReferral Advice Request, FY 2019-20



FY 2019-20



2019-20 Target

Zone and/or Provincially Enabled Specialties

Specialty	Prior to 2017-18	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Family Medicine - Transgender Care				✓
Psychiatry – Child and Adolescent				✓
Cardiology			✓	
Chronic Pain Medicine			✓	
Community Pediatrics			✓	
General Surgery*			✓	
Infectious Disease			✓	
Neurology			✓	
Obstetrics/Gynecology - Maternal Fetal Medicine			✓	
Ophthalmology – Adult			✓	
Ophthalmology – Pediatrics			✓	
Otolaryngology			✓	
Palliative Care Medicine			✓	
Urology – Pediatrics			✓	
Addiction and Mental Health – Opiate Agonist Therapy		✓		
Endocrinology		✓		
Gastroenterology – Adult		✓		
General Internal Medicine		✓		
Neurosurgery – Spinal		✓		
Obstetrics/Gynecology		✓		
Pulmonary Medicine		✓		
Urology – Adult		✓		
Nephrology	✓			
Oncology – Breast Cancer	✓			
Oncology – Lung Cancer	✓			
Orthopedic Surgery – Hip and Knee Joint Replacement	✓			
Total Enabled	4	8	12	2

* In June 2018, General Surgery was added to eReferral Advice Request. Due to the breadth of General Surgery procedures, Advice Requests for General Surgery were specified as breast-only issues (i.e. General Surgery (Breast Health)). In October 2019, six other General Surgery reasons for referral were added to eReferral Advice Request. To avoid unnecessary confusion, Breast Health was removed and now all General Surgery reasons for referral are referred to as General Surgery.

Number of eReferral Advice Requests Received

	Prior to 2017-18	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Total Advice Requests Received	98	4,934	7,013	5,135*

Source: Netcare Repository and Access Improvement as of April 14, 2020.

* The decline in eReferral Advice Requests is largely due to the introduction of eReferral Consult Request for Urology in the Edmonton Zone in June 2018 which received large volumes of inappropriate Advice Requests that are better managed through Consult Request. While Urology's Advice Requests have declined, other specialties are seeing increasing volumes.

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