

Supporting Physician Human Resources in NOSM Communities During COVID-19 Pandemic

There are several issues that are top of mind for NOSM clinical faculty as we move through the COVID19 pandemic. One of the most important issues is finding and sustaining adequate health human resources in communities across Northern Ontario. We know that our physician resources have been fragile for a long time and this pandemic places our health services at even greater risk.

Some issues will remain challenging – like our ability to bring locums into communities because of limitations on travel – but a lot of work has been done over the past several weeks to create resources to support clinical capacity in our communities. Key initiatives to increase physician resources:

- 1. Short duration licenses for IMGs and retired physicians**
- 2. Provisional licenses for residents graduating July 2020**
- 3. Matching physicians with availability to communities in need**
 - a. BookJane App**
 - b. Health Workforce Matching Portal**
- 4. Health Force Ontario improving locum services**

Increasing physician resources as a short-term response:

1. Short duration licences during pandemic:

CPSO has created short term licenses that are simple in application process and prompt in the approvals process. These short-term licenses apply to at least two groups: retired clinicians who have allowed their license to lapse within the past two years, and IMGs who meet specific criteria.

These short duration licenses require a hospital affiliation and require supervision although the supervision requirements are tailored to allow for optimizing capacity.

Further information about this can be found on the [CPSO FAQ site](#).

Lina Danaf at Health Force Ontario is available to respond to questions and provide guidance to communities and clinical groups who are seeking the support of a short-term licensed physicians. She can be contacted at: L.Danaf@healthforceontario.ca.

2. Provisional licenses for graduating residents:

Residents who are about to complete their residencies (final year) and who have completed the LMCC 1 and 2, as well as the educational requirements of their program can be granted a provisional license even in the absence of their final exams.

Information about this can also be found on the CPSO website [here](#).

If you have had a resident in your community who you are interested in recruiting during this time, and who may be eligible for provisional licensure, you are encouraged to reach out to them about ways that you might support their entry into practice in keeping with CPSO's guidance.

Additional information for NOSM residents can be found here: <https://www.nosm.ca/our-community/coronavirus-information-for-nosm-community/resident-faqs/>

3. Tools for practicing clinicians with capacity and communities in need to match:

Two online tools are available to help doctors who have capacity to do additional work to match to sites in need:

- a. The BookJane App and the Ontario government's new Health Workforce Matching Portal. Doctors may use either or both, and they are both free of charge. Hospitals, long-term care facilities, clinics and assessment centres need to register to access the profiles of all doctors registered on either tool and enter into the matching process.

The BookJane app can be found on the OMA site, with additional information for physicians to register: [BookJane app](#).

For hospital and clinical sites to register, click [here](#).

If you have any questions, please contact BookJane platform support by calling 1-855-210-2401 or emailing service@bookjane.com.

- b. The government's **Health Workforce Matching Portal** for both clinicians and sites in need is [here](#).

Additional information provided through OHA regarding the portal can be found here:

- i. [Ontario Health Workforce Matching Portal One-Pager for Health Care Providers](#)
- ii. [Training Guide for Health Care Providers](#)
- iii. [FAQ for Health Care Providers](#)

For technical support, please contact the Ontario Public Service (OPS) IT Service Desk at 1-888-677-4873 or 416-246-7171. Once you hear "You have reached the OPS IT Service Desk," please enter prompt code 011 on your telephone.

4. Health Force Ontario improving locum service-working with communities and clinicians:

a. Increasing Physician Locum Pool:

In response to COVID-19, Ontario Health (HealthForceOntario) is actively seeking physicians for longer-term locum assignments (2 weeks up to 2-3 months) in high-need communities to

assist local physician groups in maintaining essential services. Please share this information with colleagues who might have the capacity to undertake locum placements in Northern Ontario.

These placements are typically in rural communities with single-coverage emergency departments. Locum work may include ED coverage, inpatient coverage, primary care clinics etc. If you are able to assist without disrupting your own primary clinical commitments, please email emerg@healthforceontario.ca indicating the following:

- i. Full name, CPSO number and primary practice location
- ii. Region of interest for locum coverage (i.e. Northern, Eastern or Western Ontario)
- iii. Clinical background (i.e. family physician with acute care experience, full time ED physician, Hospitalist, AN, OB etc.)

b. For EDLP (emergency department locum program) eligible communities:

Health Force Ontario has been working actively with individual communities to ensure continuity of coverage.

c. For RNPGA communities:

Health Force Ontario has developed pathways to support RNPGA communities to be able to access locum days beyond their contracted allocation in order to support needs arising from the pandemic. These needs might include situations of physician illness, inability to work in high risk settings because the personal health risk is too high (due to age or underlying morbidity), or surge plans involving collaboration across a "cluster" of RNPGAs to distribute patients and services across sites to maximize overall capacity and staffing resilience. To connect with HFO to discuss a potential need for additional locum days, please contact emerg@healthforceonatrio.ca

In addition to additional available days, HFO has waived the usual 1:1 clinic to call ratio regular respite assignment in order to facilitate locums extending their stay to provide ongoing support to the hospital that is what is needed by the local clinical group.

It may also be possible to access additional remote primary care capacity through physicians who provide virtual support to the community aligned with the community EMR. Further details on this will follow.

*Sarah Newbery MD CCFP FCFP
Assistant Dean, Physician Workforce Strategy
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