

About PFSP



Physician and
Family Support
Program

What We Do



24/7 Assistance Line

- Peer to peer support
- Funding for counselling services



Education

Activities to promote prevention and awareness



Case Coordination

Service for physicians, residents and medical students with complex health concerns

What Makes PFSP Unique



Peer to Peer Support

Every caller has the opportunity to talk with a physician peer.



Individualized service by the external service provider

We don't use a large call centre. Our service provider will match you to a therapist with expertise in your particular concern. All of our therapists have extensive experience with physicians and their families.

Our Network Supporting Alberta Physicians



Service provider made up of **4 individuals**



Provincial network of **600 + therapists**



A collection of external resources (family doctors, psychiatrists, treatment facilities etc.)

PFSP Team



10 Assessment Physicians



Case Coordination team made up of **4 individuals**



Administrative team made up of **6 individuals**

Who is Eligible for PFSP Services?



Physician Groups

including physicians, residents, medical students



Immediate Family Members

of the physician groups



Third Party Callers

anyone who has a concern for a member of the physician group may access an Assessment Physician to discuss their concerns



Why do People Call the Assistance Line

Most Common Reasons for Calling PFSP

1. Mental Health/Psychiatric Issues
2. Family/Relationships
3. Addictive Disorders
4. Occupational Issues
5. Other Issues
6. Family Physician Requests

PFSP Philosophy & Mission

Philosophy

Supporting the development of effective personal wellness strategies and early intervention

Mission

Support physicians, their immediate families and enhance the quality of patient care and public safety



Where We Came From

- 1983 Physician Assistance Committee (PAC)**
Volunteer program to assist physicians with substance use disorders
- 1997 Physician Support Initiative (PSI)**
24 hour access to assistance line with access to counselling
- 1998 PAC and PSI amalgamate to form PFSP**
Funded by Alberta Health as a part of the benefits stream in the master agreement



What Guides Us

- Report to Alberta Health (funder) and AMA
- Program specific practices and guidelines
- PFSP Advisory Committee
- Program evaluation and client feedback
- College of Physicians and Surgeons (CPSA)
- Privacy and confidentiality laws
- Grant agreement with Alberta Health
- AMA leadership & PFSP administrative team
- Collaborate with Canadian Medical Association (CMA), Federation of Canadian Physician Health Programs (FCPHP), Alberta Medical Association (AMA)



 **Call us toll-free** 1.877.SOS.4MDS
(767).(4637)

24 hours a day | 7 days a week | 365 days a year

The Physician and Family Support Program provides confidential support and help with personal health issues and enhances the quality of patient care and public safety by promoting health and well-being for the medical profession that cares for all Albertans.



Confidentiality Practices



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What you need to know

PFSP 24-Hour Assistance Line

All services on the PFSP Assistance Line are provided by contractors who are external to the PFSP program and to the AMA. When you contact the PFSP Assistance Line, your identity and any other personal information you provide is known only to the Assistance Line operator and the Assessment Physician on-call.

All information shared through the PFSP toll-free Assistance Line is non identifiable by PFSP/AMA and is confidential.

Calls to the PFSP Assistance Line and referrals to our therapists are not documented in the provincial electronic health record.

Case Coordination Service

For members with complex health concerns who enter into Case Coordination (approximately 30-35 physicians in any given year), there is an informed consent process in place to disclose personal information so that the Case Coordination team may liaise with your treatment providers, as well as non-clinical stakeholders who may be involved in more complex situations.

Entering Case Coordination is voluntary. The Case Coordination team will work with you to ensure that you understand what will be shared and the purpose of the disclosure. We will not share information without your consent.

Limits to Confidentiality

If a caller to the PFSP Assistance Line were to disclose that they were at serious risk of harming themselves or someone else, or

that a child in their care were at risk of abuse or neglect, we would be legally and ethically obligated to take reasonable steps to prevent that serious harm. This could include contacting police or other authorities.

Rest Assured, Your Confidentiality is Protected

Physicians are all well versed in the importance and necessity of maintaining and protecting patient confidentiality. As a physician patient it's likely you would be reluctant to confide in a healthcare provider if you did not believe that confidentiality was an unstated assumption. PFSP applies this understanding and value to all of our work with medical students, residents, physicians, and their family members.

Our Privacy Commitment

<https://www.albertadoctors.org/services/pfsp/i-need-help-now>

If you have any questions about how PFSP maintains confidentiality, please reach out to us at 403-228-2880.



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Dealing with Adverse Events, Complaints, and Medical Legal Litigation



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The information found here is intended to provide immediate and useful information for physicians and their families when facing adverse events, complaints, challenges to privileges and medical legal litigation.

What You May Experience

- In adverse situations, you may experience intense emotion and confusion. You may feel disbelief, hurt, anger, sadness, guilt, shame, fear, anxiety and self-doubt.
- You may feel the urge to do something impulsive such as changing the way you practice, but this is not the best time to make significant decisions. Trust that these intense emotions will subside, especially once you've begun receiving the support you need such as legal counsel and counselling.
- Being excessively hard on yourself is unproductive – it can damage your morale and your ability to take action to make things better. Self evaluation, on the other hand, can be a positive motivator for change. Analyzing the incident as to how it happened, why it resulted in a complaint or legal suit, and what can be learned from the experience may even benefit you in the long run.
- Errors and adverse medical outcomes are usually the result of a number of factors. It's reasonable for you to acknowledge your role in the incident. Recognize, though, that others – staff, the hospital, the system and sometimes even the patient – may have played a role.
- You may feel that a complaint or legal suit is a betrayal or an affront in response to the long hours and the personal sacrifices of your career.
- Complaint and legal processes can be time consuming and take longer than you might wish. Focus on one step at a time, with the guidance of your lawyer as well as your counselor (PFSP). This can help prevent putting your life on hold, or dwelling on the “what ifs”.
- Make a point of caring for yourself and your family. Eating well, adequate sleep, exercise and allowing yourself some pleasurable activities will help you cope with this stressful experience.

Helpful Self-Talk & Actions To Take

- I can expect to be very upset. This is an emotionally painful experience.
- Being sued is not an attack on me personally.
- Virtually all physicians experience situations of miscommunication, adverse events and errors.
- Litigation and complaints can happen regardless of whether negligence actually occurred.
- It is reasonable that a patient should be compensated if he or she is injured by error.
- I owe it to myself to keep balanced thoughts by acknowledging all the positive contributions and relationships I've made in medicine. This unpleasant event does not need to diminish my overall satisfaction of the practice of medicine.
- It is appropriate to evaluate the situation, attend to my role in the incident and learn from this process.
- Right now the feelings are very intense and uncomfortable. This intensity lessens over time. I will make it through this; I will seek out help and support, and take one step at a time.

Impact On Family Members

- Your family can also expect to experience a wide range of emotions similar to the physician. They may also feel betrayed by the patient/health system. They may feel anger and shame as to how this situation might reflect on you.
- Initiate discussion about feelings and emotions with your family member. Encourage communication. In the Province of Alberta, communication between spouses is confidential. A physician family member cannot be forced to disclose.
- Seek support through the Physician and Family Support Program (PFSP) for yourself and other family members if you need information, advice or counselling.
- Seek help from PFSP if you, your spouse or other family members are suffering from depression or anxiety.
- Plan some family activities. Discuss and acknowledge each other's feelings.



When your patient experiences an adverse event or you receive a notice of claim, complaint or challenge to privileges, call:

Canadian Medical Protective Association (CMPA) 1.800.267.6522

- The CMPA is the organization through which physicians in Canada carry medical liability protection. They provide legal counsel across Canada. The CMPA is a great support and excellent source of information.
- Communicating and disclosing to your patient about an adverse event can be difficult. The CMPA has helpful information on disclosure available on their website at www.cmpa-acpm.ca
- Calling CMPA is a critical first step when facing an adverse event and prior to responding to a notice of complaint or a challenge to privileges.
- The CMPA physician advisor will be able to give you valuable advice. If necessary, you will be referred to appropriate legal counsel for further guidance.
- Uncertainty about the process of complaint or litigation is normal. The CMPA will guide and support you through the specific steps and processes to be taken. For more information go to:
 1. CMPA's website at <https://www.cmpa-acpm.ca/en/advice-publications/help-and-advice>
 2. CPSA's website at <http://www.cpsa.ca/complaints/our-complaints-process/>

Physician and Family Support Program (PFSP) 1.877.767.4637

- The Physician and Family Support Program is an Alberta Medical Association program available to all physicians, residents and medical students and their families in Alberta and the Yukon.
- PFSP provides valuable, confidential, emotional support and counselling for you and your family.
- Physicians are often concerned about the confidentiality of their information, and calls to the PFSP line and referral to our therapists are confidential and are not entered into the provincial electronic health record.

Tips

- Record everything you can remember about the incident for your own future reference. Protect and secure the medical file. Do not change or write anything on the file. Make a photocopy of the file.
- It is best not to discuss the content of a lawsuit, complaint or challenge with others. It is, however, acceptable and beneficial to share your feelings in general around this challenging experience with an appropriate, trusted individual.



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Physicians for Physicians (P4P)



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PFSP now recruiting family physicians willing to take colleagues as patients



Established by PFSP, P4P is a confidential network of family physicians who are willing to take colleagues, if possible, as patients in their practices.

The PFSP will help to connect physicians who call the 1-877-767-4637 Assistance Line to a family physician who has agreed to participate in the P4P program.

More than ever, physicians need the care and support of a family doctor, but many are without primary care for themselves or their family members. All physicians can benefit from having a personal family physician to maintain optimal health and thus enable them to better care for their patients.

Sign up now!

The P4P service is used by physicians of all career stages, and its success relies on family physicians signing up to be providers in this network.

If you are a family physician willing to be a provider, scan the QR code to access the sign-up form.



General FAQs

How many requests for family physicians does the PFSP receive in a year?

Each year, through the 1-877-767-4637 Assistance Line, the PFSP receives over 300 requests from physician callers and their immediate family members to help make a connection to family physicians.

Many of those calling the line are medical students or residents who are new to Alberta, as well as physicians whose previous family physician has retired or moved.

How does the PFSP manage the connection process?

The PFSP facilitates the connection between an individual in need of a family physician and one of the family physicians who has signed up to be a provider through the P4P service.

The PFSP considers several factors when making this connection including location and gender requests and works to distribute referrals equitably amongst the P4P providers.

While the PFSP does its best to match the needs of an individual, there are no guarantees provided. Requests for family physicians with special areas of interest or those that serve specific client populations are not always possible to match.

Contact us

For more information, please contact us by email: PFSP@albertadoctors.org.

FAQs

For the P4P provider

I am interested in signing up to be a family physician provider as a part of the P4P service. How often will my name be provided to callers?

The PFSP attempts to make connections equitably so as not to overwhelm any one provider. In the larger urban centers of Calgary and Edmonton, on average you can expect to receive one-to-three requests per month. If you are a physician in a rural setting the referrals are typically less frequent.

Are there guidelines or expectations I am expected to follow?

P4P providers maintain autonomy in upholding their practice guidelines when considering new patients. The PFSP informs individuals that they are being provided the name of a physician who is willing to take physician colleagues as patients, but that this does not impact or influence priority access or timeliness to appointments nor any other special treatment.

I am willing to take physician colleagues into my practice as a part of the P4P service but am unable to accept immediate family members. Am I still able to volunteer to be a P4P provider?

Yes, all decisions related to accepting a new patient, including acceptance of family members as patients, is left to the discretion of the provider. Additionally, you can include specific criteria you have during the sign-up process which will help us match you to callers most appropriately.

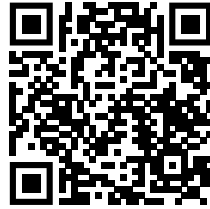
What if I am unable to accept referrals from the PFSP after I have signed up?

You can manage your participation as a P4P provider by accessing the P4P link on your personal AMA dashboard and change your status from “Active” to “On Hold”. The PFSP will not connect clients to you until you change your status back to “Active”. For more information, please email: pfsp@albertadoctors.org.

How do I update my contact information as a P4P provider?

You can update your information by accessing the P4P link on your personal AMA dashboard. For more information, please email pfsp@albertadoctors.org.

Does the PFSP provide any support or resources for P4P providers?



At this time, the PFSP offers the following resources:

- “Doctoring” doctors and their families
- For physicians who treat other physicians

If any of the providers on the P4P list have a helpful resource or a suggestion about how the PFSP could further support P4P providers, please email pfsp@albertadoctors.org.

Is the P4P service only for family physician connections?

Yes. The PFSP believes that all physicians benefit from having a family physician and a Medical Home to maintain optimal health and thus enable them to better care for their patients. Once connected to a family physician, further referrals to other specialists can be made and coordinated through the family physician.

For those seeking a family physician

Are there any expectations of me if I receive a family physician connection through the PFSP?

Yes. The PFSP will ask you to contact the clinic yourself to make an appointment and to notify the clinic that you have been connected with this physician by the PFSP, this is essential information for the front office staff. It is important to note that a connection made by the PFSP does not imply expedited access to the clinic or that you can bypass the clinic’s processes.

While the PFSP does its best to match the needs of an individual, there are no guarantees provided. Requests for family physicians with special areas of interest or those that serve specific client populations are not always possible to match.

I have been connected to a family physician through the PFSP but it wasn’t a good fit for me. What can I do?

Please contact the 1-877-767-4637 Assistance Line and request a new family physician connection.

Can I request the P4P list of physician providers from the PFSP and find my own family physician?

No. The PFSP does not share this information. Connections to family physicians must be made through the 1-877-767-4637 Assistance Line.
