

Relocating a Medical Practice

The College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta (CPSA) provides advice to the profession to support physicians in implementing the CPSA Standards of Practice. This advice does not define a standard of practice, nor should it be interpreted as legal advice.

Advice to the Profession documents are dynamic and may be edited or updated for clarity at any time. Please refer back to these articles regularly to ensure you are aware of the most recent advice. Major changes will be communicated to our members; however, minor edits may only be noted within the documents.

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When does the *Relocating a Medical Practice* standard apply?

The [Relocating a Medical Practice](#) standard should be followed when a physician moves their practice location a distance that is reasonable for a patient to follow. What is considered “reasonable” will depend on each physician’s unique practice location; for example, a move from Okotoks to Calgary may be reasonable, a move from Calgary to Edmonton would be too far for most patients to travel to see their physician. In this case, the [Closing or Leaving a Medical Practice](#) standard must be followed.

Notification of closure

Patients seen within the last year who have an expectation of ongoing care must be given individual notice 45 days in advance of losing their physician. This may be done in any number of ways, such as:

- letter
- secured email
- telephone call
- verbally

It is acceptable to send notifications via email, as no personally identifiable patient information is being transmitted.

The notification should include details of the physician's last day in the clinic, contact information of the new clinic and how patients can access copies of their records if they opt not to follow the physician to the new location.

CPSA needs to be aware of practice relocations and have a physician's forwarding address/contact information for any correspondence.

Additionally, notifying colleagues with whom they regularly consult helps ensure [continuity of care](#) and reduces the length of time the former clinic needs to forward correspondence to the physician who relocates. For AHS facilities and Connect Care, any changes to provider demographics or provider status may be sent to [AHS Provider Requests](#).

Responsibilities of physicians working at the former location

In concert with the [Responsibility for a Medical Practice](#) standard, physicians practising at the former location are responsible for ensuring staff facilitate compliance with these standards.

PROVIDING INFORMATION TO THE PUBLIC

If the former clinic receives phone calls, faxes, letters or other requests for a physician who has relocated, they must provide the physician's new contact information, if it is known. Physicians need to ensure their staff are aware of this requirement.

INFORMATION SHARING AGREEMENTS

When a physician leaves their practice, but does not maintain custodianship of their patients' records (i.e., another healthcare provider practises in the same location), an Information Sharing Agreement (ISA) is required.

The ISA should address who is maintaining custody of the records (in accordance with the [Patient Record Retention](#) standard of practice), how costs pertaining to copies of records will be handled and what those reasonable costs are. While CPSA does not require a copy of an ISA, we do need a [Custody of Patient Records form](#) from physicians who don't maintain custodianship of their patients' records.

For more information on ISAs, please refer to the [Physicians as Custodians of Patient Records](#) Advice to the Profession document.

CONTINUITY OF CARE

Any correspondence for the physician who has relocated must be made available to allow continuity of care and reduce patient risk. This could include transmission by fax, secure email, courier, etc.

If the transfer of records has not been completed prior to a physician's departure, access to the EMR should be extended for a reasonable length of time until the physician is able to access their patients' records in their new location.

Resources

CPSA team members are available to speak with physicians who have questions or concerns. Please contact Chantelle Dick, Standards of Practice Advisor, at 780-717-2573 or chantelle.dick@cpsa.ab.ca.

RELATED STANDARDS OF PRACTICE

- [Closing or Leaving a Medical Practice](#)
- [Continuity of Care](#)
- [Patient Record Retention](#)
- [Relocating a Medical Practice](#)
- [Responsibility for a Medical Practice](#)

COMPANION RESOURCES

- [Advice to the Profession: Physicians as Custodians of Patient Records](#)
- [Are You Up to Standard? Relocating or closing your practice? Read this!](#)
- [Custody of Patient Records Form](#)
- [Notification of Change Form](#)
- [Professional Corporation Address Change Form](#)