

POLICY AND PROCEDURE	
Subject: Physician/Provider Switching Policy	Category: Administrative
Date Approved:	Date Revised: June 28, 2022
Author: Clinic Manager	Reviewing Body: MHC Physicians
Specific to: All Staff	Next Review Date: June 28, 2024

DATE(S) REVISED/REVIEWED SUMMARY

Version	Date	Comments/Changes
1.0		Initial Policy
2.0	June 28, 2022	Policy Updated, extensive additional information added

INTRODUCTION

The Mapleton Health Centre recognizes that from time to time for various reasons patients may wish to switch physicians or providers. It is in the interest of patients, physicians, providers, and the clinic that the patient/provider relationship be positive and therapeutic.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to continue to foster an environment with a positive and therapeutic patient/provider relationship. The Mapleton Health Centre understands that the patient/provider relationship is critical and complex.

POLICY

The policy of the Mapleton Health Centre is to not allow switches to other physicians/providers within the clinic. There are several different reasons for this that relate to ensuring physicians/providers working in a collaborative team environment can deliver the best long-term patient care possible. Some of these reasons are as follows:

1. Maximizing physician/provider availability;
2. Preventing the screening of patients;
3. Supporting sound physician/provider decision making;
4. All physicians/providers at the Mapleton Health Centre are fully qualified to provide primary care to patients of all ages and genders. All of the physicians/providers at the Mapleton Health Centre

practice in similar ways;

5. As an organization, the Mapleton Health Centre believes in and promotes equality and respect for all and have an obligation to not discriminate or support discrimination;
6. The Mapleton Health Centre physicians/providers work in a collaborative group practice. If a patient is unhappy with their current physician/provider, there may be instances where the patient would have to see that physician/provider again should the patient stay with another physician/provider within the clinic; this has the potential to result in suboptimal medical care.

In addition, positive side-effects of this policy include:

- Reducing high-risk patient hand-overs;
- Promoting long-term patient/provider relationships;
- Enabling family-friendly staffing policies.

Notably, this policy applies even in situations when a particular patient is requesting a switch based primarily on physician gender.

DEFINITIONS

Maximizing Physician/Provider Availability

A time-consuming task for physicians/providers is the work associated with taking over responsibility for care of a patient. Every new patient involves several hours of work comprising an initial meeting, a detailed review of medical records, and constructing and configuring an optimized medical record.

This investment of time and resources is redundant if a patient decides to switch to a new physician with the clinic and this procedure needs to be completed again. In the aggregate, not allowing switches between Mapleton Health Centre physicians/providers helps maximize physician availability to provide medical care and not administrative tasks.

Preventing the Screening of Patients

Different patients have different needs and expectations. In a clinical environment, these differences can sometimes manifest as an unconscious desire, on the part of the physicians/providers, to screen out patients.

As a clinic the Mapleton Health Centre does not believe this is appropriate, and strongly believes in the professional obligation of physicians/providers to accept patients on a first-come, first-served basis.

Not allowing switches between physicians/providers supports the philosophy that physicians/providers must take patients as they come and helps ensure the Mapleton Health Centre physicians/ providers continually work hard to provide the best possible care of all of their patients.

It is a physician's/provider's duty to provide appropriate and quality medical care. Fulfilling this duty means sometimes saying no to patient requests or making an unpopular treatment recommendation. In such circumstances, some patients may wish to seek out a second opinion or a different approach.

In a collaborative team-based clinic, allowing switches between clinic physicians/providers undermines both this duty, as well as the patient's ability to obtain unbiased second opinions. Patients deserve independent second opinions, which requires seeing a physician/provider at a different clinic altogether.

Positive Side Effects

In addition to the reasons for this policy discussed above, there are several additional positive side effects worth nothing.

One positive outcome is a reduction in transfer of responsibility between physicians/providers for patient care. Such transfers are known to increase the risk of administrative and medical errors; minimizing the frequency and need for such transfer in turn reduces the risk of such errors.

Another positive outcome is the promotion of long-term patient/provider relationships which research has evidenced reduces morbidity and mortality. Not allowing instar-clinic switches promotes overcoming therapeutic patient/provider relationship challenges.

PROCEDURE

If after ready this policy a patient feels that they are not able to continue therapeutic patient/provider relationship, the following steps can be taken:

1. The patient is to make an appointment with their existing provider to discuss their reasons for leaving. This will help the provider understand if there is something they can improve on in the future.
2. Alternatively the patient can write a letter and send a copy to both the provider and the Mapleton Health Centre Clinic Manager via mail:

Elizabeth Boyne
c/o Mapleton Health Centre
11 Andrews Dr. W
Drayton, ON
N0G 1P0

Or via email:

admin@mapletonhc.ca

3. If the patient and provider decide together that it would be best to terminate the patient/provider relationship, the provider will assist the patient in finding another provider in the area if at all possible.

This policy is not intended to prevent patients from reasonable access to a physician. Patients are able to seek care with a new physician at a different clinic if they choose to do so.



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Physician/Provider Switching Policy

Acknowledgment

I, _____, acknowledge that I have read and understand the Physician/Provider Switching Policy of the Mapleton Health Centre. I agree to adhere to this policy.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Witness: _____