September 1, 2026

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RE: Ministry of Health update: Digital Referrals and Orders (DRO) Program

Dear Health System Partner,

The Province of British Columbia is proceeding with the Digital Referrals and Orders (DRO) program as a key priority within the broader health system transformation agenda. The DRO program will enable clinicians to send, receive, and track referrals, diagnostic orders, and special authority requests electronically, reducing reliance on fax and paper-based processes. This will reduce the risk of lost, incomplete, or delayed requests, improve the quality of information provided, and give clinicians and patients better visibility into the status of a request. The program can also support referral guidance and clinical decision-making at the point of care. For physicians, nurses, and clinic staff, this will reduce administrative burden and allow more time to be focused on patient care. As a result, the Ministry of Health expects to see improved timeliness, transparency, and information quality across care settings.

This initiative will be led by BC Shared Health Services (BCSHS) and reflects government's commitment to improving timely access to care, enhancing coordination across the system, and delivering tangible benefits for both patients and physicians and other health care providers. BCSHS is restarting the deployment of Ocean, DRO's digital system for eReferrals and eOrders. In parallel, BCSHS has established a renewed governance structure to guide further program planning. This structure is intended to provide strong clinical and system leadership with participation from Ministry of Health, Doctors of BC, Family Practice Services Committee, Pathways BC, OceanMD, health authorities, and other partners.

As part of this work, we recognize the significant value of Pathways BC in supporting a unified and streamlined experience for physicians and other healthcare providers. Pathways BC is a clinical navigation system and referral decision-support platform that supports clinicians in identifying the most appropriate care pathway for their patients. This includes helping clinicians determine whether a referral is needed, access information and resources to support management in primary care where appropriate, and, when a referral is required, identify the appropriate specialist, clinic, or service and understand the requirements and processes for accessing that care.

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Pathways is an important and valued part of the provincial digital health ecosystem. There is a clear opportunity to build on the complementary strengths of Pathways BC and OceanMD and ensure clinicians benefit from a cohesive and connected experience across the referral journey.

The Province views the successful modernization of referrals and orders as foundational to a more integrated and efficient health system. We also believe this represents an important opportunity to strengthen collaboration across partners and deliver meaningful improvements for patients and providers across British Columbia. Our immediate focus is to restart our community deployment to enable a connected ecosystem and transparency to our patients on their referral trajectory.

We would welcome your continued engagement and support in preparing your clinics and teams and/or related clinical information systems such as electronic medical records as this work progresses. For further information on this initiative, please visit: https://dro.phsa.ca/.

With appreciation,

Cynthia Johansen, MSc, MA
Deputy Minister
Ministry of Health