

GROUP HEALTH CENTRE ACCESS CARE CLINIC

The Group Health Centre (GHC) Access Care Clinic is being established as a temporary solution to bridge the gap for GHC patients being de-rostered on or after May 31. Led by Nurse Practitioners, this innovative clinic will provide essential services such as urgent care, episodic care, chronic disease symptom management, and prescription maintenance. It will also facilitate ongoing referrals and ensure uninterrupted access to GHC's programs and services. Patients will benefit from the continued utilization of the GHC Electronic Medical Record, which houses their history and provides ongoing access to MyChart, an electronic patient portal. The clinic will help reduce the risk of unnecessary Emergency Department visits and other burdens on our already strained health system while we continue to focus on recruiting and retaining healthcare providers.

We want to take a moment to acknowledge that the past several months have been difficult, and the prospect of not having a primary care provider has created a lot of uncertainty. The new clinic will be implemented quickly to best bridge the immediate needs of impacted patients. As such, we appreciate your patience and understanding while we increase our capacity in the clinic over the coming months.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

Logistics And Clinic Operations:

1. Where is the clinic located?

- 170 East Street, 3rd Floor.

2. What are the clinic's operating hours?

- The clinic will initially be open to see patients from Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. The phone line will be open at 8 a.m.

3. How can I make an appointment at the clinic?

- As of Monday, June 3, you can contact the clinic to make an appointment by calling 705-908-3875.

4. Can I schedule an appointment into the future, or will appointments only be offered the day of (like GHC's Same-Day Clinic)?

- At this time, appointments are only available on the same day. Any future changes to appointment scheduling will be communicated broadly.

5. Will the clinic accept walk-in visits, or will appointments be required?

- Appointments will be required; walk-ins will not be seen.

Access:

6. Who can access this temporary clinic?

- The GHC Access Care Clinic is specifically established to provide care for GHC patients who were de-rostered on or after May 31. To be eligible for this temporary clinic, patients must not have registered with another physician or Nurse Practitioner. This service aims to provide continued healthcare access until patients secure a new primary care provider.

7. I was de-rostered prior to May 2024 and before the announcement of the 10,000 patients. Can I access this clinic?

- No, recently announced funding will provide care for patients de-rostered on or after May 31, 2024.
- The GHC continues to work hard to secure additional funding and create a mechanism to provide care in the future for previously de-rostered patients.

8. My physician recently left GHC to open their own practice. Can I access this clinic?

- No, if your physician left GHC and you transitioned with them as part of their new practice, you are not eligible to access the GHC Access Care Clinic. This clinic is specifically designed for patients who were de-rostered from GHC and do not have access to a primary care provider.

9. I am being de-rostered, and I am pregnant. Can I access the clinic for well-baby care?

- Yes, GHC will provide well-baby care for newborns of de-rostered patients.

10. Can family members also receive care at the temporary clinic if they were not originally part of GHC?

- No, the GHC Access Care Clinic is only available to individuals who were de-rostered from GHC.

11. I still have a primary care provider at GHC. Can I access this clinic?

- No, if you currently have a primary care provider at GHC, you will continue to see your existing provider for your healthcare needs, which includes access to the same-day clinic.

12. Will I still have access to other GHC services?

- Yes, you will continue to have access to all GHC services except for the same-day clinic.

Services And Care Provided:

13. What specific services will be available at the Access Care Clinic?

- The clinic services will act as a bridge to essential care management for patients without a primary care provider.
- The GHC Access Care Clinic will offer a range of healthcare services tailored to meet the needs of de-rostered patients. These services include:
 - Urgent Care: This is immediate care for conditions that require prompt attention but are not severe enough to necessitate an Emergency Department visit.
 - Episodic Care: Treatment for sudden illnesses or conditions that do not require long-term management. This includes the completion of forms.
 - Chronic Disease Symptom Management: Support and treatment plans for symptom management of chronic conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, CHF, COPD, and asthma.
 - Prescription Maintenance and Renewal: Ensuring continuous access to necessary medications.
 - Ongoing Referrals: Facilitating referrals to specialists and other healthcare services as needed.
 - Access to GHC Programs and Services: Continued access and utilization of GHC programs typically available to rostered patients only (Anticoagulation Clinic, Congestive Heart Failure, Family Health Program).
 - Well-Baby Care: Care for newborns of recently de-rostered patients.

14. Who will provide the care at the Access Care Clinic?

- Care at the GHC Access Care Clinic will primarily be provided by Nurse Practitioners and Nurses, who will be supported by Registered Practical Nurses (RPNs) and Allied Health Workers.

15. My previous primary care provider referred me to a specialist. Is my referral still valid, and how will follow-up work?

- Your referral is still valid. Follow-up notes from the specialist will be forwarded to the primary care provider who ordered the referral.

16. How are chronic illnesses managed at the Access Care Clinic, especially those requiring regular monitoring and intervention?

- You will continue to have access to GHC Chronic Disease Management Programs, including the Anticoagulation Clinic, Family Health Worker Program, and Injection Clinic.
- While the clinic aims to manage chronic conditions as effectively as possible, our primary goal is to bridge care until patients are attached to a permanent primary care provider who can undertake comprehensive chronic disease management. We are, however, committed to providing the best care possible under these circumstances.
- Here's our approach:
 - Specialist Referrals: Recognizing the complexity of chronic disease management, we utilize specialist referrals when advanced care is needed beyond what the clinic or GHC's Programs and Services can provide. This ensures that patients receive expert care tailored to their specific conditions.
 - Leveraging GHC Programs and Services: You will continue to have access to GHC's existing programs designed to support chronic disease management. These programs offer additional resources and specialized care that complement the services provided at the clinic.
 - Medication Management: While managing medications, we coordinate closely with pharmacists to ensure continuity and accuracy in medication regimens.

Operational Questions:

17. I'm trying to register with Healthcare Connect to get a new primary care provider, but I am being told that I am still rostered to a provider at GHC. What should I do?

- Unfortunately, the de-rostering process through the Ministry of Health typically takes some time. If you encounter this issue, please continue to monitor your status and try re-registering with Healthcare Connect after a few weeks. Alternatively, you can also visit or call Service Ontario, and they can update the information for you. In the meantime, you can still access care through the GHC Access Care Clinic.

18. Will I still be able to access my medical records and MyChart?

- Yes, you will have read-only access to MyChart, which allows you to view your health information and medical history securely. Additionally, your medical record will remain available to you for ten years following your de-roster. There is no immediate need to request a copy of your medical records during this period. We ensure that you can continue to access your health information conveniently as you transition to a new primary care provider.

19. How long will the temporary clinic operate?

- The GHC Interim Care Clinic is designed as a temporary solution with the intent to remain in place until patients are re-rostered with a primary care provider, at GHC or elsewhere. This clinic serves as a bridge to ensure that our de-rostered patients continue to receive necessary healthcare services during this transitional period. Our goal at GHC is to ensure that each patient finds a stable medical home where they can receive ongoing, comprehensive primary care. Efforts to recruit and retain primary care providers are ongoing, and we are committed to minimizing the duration of any disruptions in care for our patients.

20. Will the temporary clinic have enough capacity to handle current and future de-rostered patients?

- Our aim is to ensure that all de-rostered patients receive timely and appropriate care while efforts are made to re-roster them with a permanent primary care provider. We are committed to doing everything we can with the funding and resources available to create strategies to meet the healthcare needs of our patients as effectively as possible during this period.

21. Should I register on Healthcare Connect while I access the clinic?

- Yes, Healthcare Connect helps connect patients without a primary care provider to doctors and nurse practitioners in their community. Although GHC is actively trying to recruit new physicians and nurse practitioners, new providers may also join the community in private practice or through another Family Health Team or Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinic. Enrolling in Healthcare Connect maximizes your chances of finding a permanent primary care provider, ensuring continuity of care beyond the services offered at the clinic.

22. With the Access Care Clinic, am I still considered “De-Rostered”?

- Yes, because you are not “attached” to a permanent primary care provider, you are still “de-rostered.”

23. If I find a primary care provider somewhere other than GHC, do I need to notify the clinic?

- Yes, please notify the clinic if you secure a new permanent primary care provider.

24. If GHC hires a new provider, will patients from the clinic be re-rostered?

- Yes, our intention is to transition patients back to a primary care provider.

25. How will GHC choose which patients are re-rostered when a new provider joins GHC?

- Patients are randomly chosen from the clinic patient population.

26. What is GHC doing to secure new primary care providers?

- GHC continues to work with the Physician Recruitment Committee along with Algoma District Medical Group, City of Sault Ste. Marie, and Sault Area Hospital to recruit new physicians to our community.
- In addition, GHC will be launching a new “Grow Your Own Nurse Practitioner” Program. This is an important component of the clinic funding to ensure a sustainable solution to the primary care provider shortage.