

The OurCare Standard

The OurCare Standard represents what every person living in Canada should be able to expect of the primary care they receive. And it provides a framework for comparing different models of primary care and levelling up those models to realize better primary care for everyone living in Canada.

-  **1** **Everyone** has a relationship with a primary care clinician who works with other health professionals in a publicly funded team.
-  **2** **Everyone** receives ongoing care from their primary care team and can access them in a timely way.
-  **3** **Everyone's** primary care team is connected to community and social services that together support their physical, mental and social well-being.
-  **4** **Everyone** can access their health record online and share it with their clinicians.
-  **5** **Everyone** receives culturally safe care that meets their needs from clinicians that represent the diversity of the communities they serve.
-  **6** **Everyone** receives care from a primary care system that is accountable to the communities it serves.

Understanding the OurCare Standard

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The first element of the Standard affirms that everyone living in Canada has an ongoing relationship with a primary care clinician — whether a family doctor or nurse practitioner — and that this clinician should actively work with other health professionals in a team-based setting or network. It also affirms a key Canadian value: that health care should remain publicly funded and free at the point of access to all.

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The second element of the Standard reminds us that high-quality primary care is relationship-centred and ongoing. While care may not always be with the individual's regular clinician, it should occur with another member of the clinician's team who has access to the patient's health records in order to ensure good continuity of care. This standard also asserts that everyone living in Canada should be able to access a member of their primary care team in a timely way, which includes availability in the evenings and weekends and options for both virtual and in-person care.

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The third element of the Standard reflects the importance of all primary care teams developing active links to community and social services, and working in partnership with them to promote good health, prevent disease, and foster the well-being of the individual. People in Canada want a primary care system that is focused on wellness and not on sickness, which means care that is holistic, preventive, and addresses the social determinants of health.

¹"Cultural Safety: Supporting Increased cultural competency and safety throughout Northern Health," Indigenous Health BC, accessed 30 January 2024. <https://www.indigenouthealthnh.ca/cultural-safety#cultural-safety>

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The fourth element of the Standard asserts that everyone living in Canada should own and control access to their health record. This record should integrate each patient's history of health care consultations as well as all health data related to the patient, regardless of the health service provider. It should be available to patients as an integrated electronic record. The idea of an integrated, personal health record is a long-standing goal of many governments and health service providers in Canada. People in Canada remain emphatic that this goal should be achieved.

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The fifth element of the Standard asserts that everyone is entitled to culturally safe care. This means that people feel respected and safe when they interact with the health care system and are supported to draw strength from their identity, culture, and community¹. It means care that is free from racism and discrimination and accessible to people regardless of language or disability. Primary care should offer a full range of services that meet people's needs, including gender-affirming care, care for mental health and addictions, and Indigenous models of care. Culturally safe care requires more clinicians and care providers from traditionally underrepresented groups. Representation in the health workforce can help redress instances of discrimination and historical injustice, build trust with equity-deserving communities and ensure culturally safe, high-quality care.

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The sixth element of the Standard asserts the importance of community accountability. This means that primary care systems across Canada should regularly and publicly report on their performance using standardized and comparable measures. It also means that primary care systems, including government and local teams, need to foster accountability by inviting community members to play a real role in their governance. One element of accountability is ensuring that primary care is funded at a level appropriate to community needs.

Over 16 months, OurCare heard from almost 10,000 people across Canada about their hopes and priorities for a better primary care system. Visit [OurCare.ca](https://ourcare.ca) to learn more.