

FAQ on Family Health Team (FHT) model for physicians

Updated: August 2025

1. How would you describe the FHT model to a medical student or early-career physician?

A FHT is a collaborative, team-based model of care where primary care providers (physicians and nurse practitioners) work alongside a group of allied health professionals to provide comprehensive, patient-centred care. This approach emphasizes prevention, chronic disease management, and improved access for patients.

Access is improved because instead of being matched with a single provider, patients are matched to a FHT in their community, ensuring they can access the right health care from the right practitioner, at the right time.

2. What makes Horizon's FHT model unique compared to other family practice models (e.g., Family Medicine New Brunswick, fee-for-service, hospitalist)? Why should a physician or student consider choosing it?

FHTs approach care in a team setting, which promotes shared care and a supported working environment, by distributing the workload, so physicians don't have to be everything to their patients anymore.

Unlike solo or fee-for-service models, Horizon's FHT model offer more predictable hours, administrative support and integrated care pathways. This model is ideal for physicians who value collaboration, continuity of care, and good work-life balance.

Providers know their patients remain cared for if anything were to happen to them, they don't carry the worry of *What happens if I get sick?* or *What happens when I retire?* because Horizon works with physicians and teams for solutions and succession planning.

Through this model, Horizon aims to support Primary Care Providers by providing a team environment, providing enhanced provider, and patient satisfaction. It has been proven to provide better access and an improved patient experience by bringing together different health care professionals with a variety of competencies, skills and experiences to address the needs of the patients they serve.

3. What types of professionals typically make up an FHT?

Each FHT includes different staff based on the health needs of the community. The team may include:

- Physician
- Nurse practitioner
- Physician assistant
- Registered nurse
- Licensed practical nurse
- Patient navigator
- Social worker
- Licensed counselling therapist

- Registered dietitian
- Occupational therapist
- Physiotherapist
- Respiratory therapist
- Pharmacist
- Medical office assistant
- ... and others

The exact makeup of each FHT is meant to serve each unique community. The number and types of health professionals within a team will depend on the size and the needs of the community they serve.

4. What compensation models are available to physicians in FHT (e.g., salaried, fee-for-service, contract)?

At Horizon, FHT physicians are compensated through various models depending on the specific arrangement and location. Flexibility allows for tailoring to physician preferences and community needs.

5. Is the work arrangement flexible (e.g., part-time, casual, hybrid)?

FHTs offer flexibility in work arrangements, including full-time, part-time or locum. Many providers want to practice family medicine part-time while also working in a subspecialty area such as sports medicine, medical assistance in dying, care of the elderly, or emergency medicine. Horizon's model supports this flexibility.

In some areas, we have retired physicians who have offered to support open access clinics for patients without a primary care provider. These physicians support communities by offering episodic care, or care for those seeking care for non-urgent medical issues.

In addition, we are actively working on succession planning across Horizon, offering opportunities to transition into existing practices, through a team-based environment.

6. Who is eligible to join an FHT? Are new grads, locums, or retired physicians welcome?

We welcome all physicians to join a FHT in their community. There are opportunities for new graduates, locums, internationally trained physicians, semi-retired physicians, and fully retired physicians who wish to return to a practice. The model supports the full gamut of career stages and interests.

7. Are physicians responsible for their own patient panels, or is care shared across the team?

Physicians (and nurse practitioners) will maintain their own patient panels as the most-responsible provider, but care is shared across the team. This means patients can access multiple professionals within the FHT.

8. What kind of administrative or operational support does Horizon provide to FHT?

Horizon's FHT model provides administrative and operational support, including support with recruitment of allied-health and administrative professionals, human resources, scheduling, quality improvement, and practice support. In return, Primary Care Providers working within the FHT model are accountable to report on key performance metrics to Horizon on a monthly basis.

In addition to accountability and the continued support from Horizon, this data helps meet provincial reporting requirements for the Department of Health, and determine future needs at a community and system level, and will ensure we continue to provide your team with the appropriate resources and supports.

What we're reporting on monthly is as follows:

- Patient panel
- Monthly visit data
- Same-day access
- Extended-hours access
- Third-next available appointment

Clinical and operational support is unique to each FHT, but the model is designed to reduce the administrative burden on physicians.

9. Is electronic-medical record (EMR) use mandatory, and which systems are supported?

Yes, EMR is mandatory as we build teams. This is a way to ensure seamless collaboration among physicians and the members of the care team for better continuity, safety and efficiency.

That said, we work with our senior colleagues to support them by creating options that allow them to continue using paper charts where appropriate, while ensuring that new providers have full EMR access.

10. What is the process for joining or forming an FHT?

Any interested physicians can begin the conversation by reaching out to Horizon's Primary Health Care by emailing PHCPlanning@HorizonNB.ca.