

## Welcome to the PPN

This overview is for the physicians and their practice staff who are connecting to the Private Physician Network (the “PPN”) as part of their implementation of a PITO-qualified EMR system.

**Note:** The information in this document does not apply to practices connecting to the PPN through a gateway at their local Health Authority (including Northern Health Physician Connect Network and Vancouver Coastal Health’s Diamond Centre). These practices should, instead, refer to the **“PPN Health Authority Gateway Primer”**.

Complete details on the Private Physician Network are available on the PITO website at [www.pito.bc.ca](http://www.pito.bc.ca) under its ‘Document Library’ section.





## What is the PPN?

The PPN is the private, high-speed network now available to physicians and practice staff to access the clinical information in their PITO-qualified electronic medical record (EMR) systems. The Ministry of Health Services offers this PPN service as part of the Physician Information Technology Office (PITO) program. The PPN is the physicians' private lane on BC's eHealth information highway.

## What Does the PPN Do for Physicians?

For many practices, the PPN will replace the Internet connection they already have with existing network vendors. The PPN is a private, high speed network that physicians and staff will use to:

- Connect the computers in their practice to their selected EMR application;
- Access clinical reference tools available on the public Internet and available clinical applications from Health Authorities;
- Access their EMRs for periodic use from a home computer with Internet access, or other locations outside their practice, over a strongly encrypted virtual private network (VPN); and
- Eventually, access information in other provincial eHealth systems such as PharmaNet.

## What Are the Benefits of the PPN?

The PPN is a TELUS managed network tailored to physician needs and it has many advantages over existing consumer-grade networks such as:

- Professionally and centrally managed firewall, anti-virus, intrusion prevention and intrusion detection systems;
- High service levels for network availability and problem resolution;
- Help desk support integrated with PITO-qualified EMR vendor help desks;
- No PPN monthly costs because the network is funded by the Ministry of Health Services as part of the PITO program; and
- When available, email under a domain name for BC physicians – "[your.name@bcdocs.bc.ca](mailto:your.name@bcdocs.bc.ca)". This is planned as a future service.

## How Do Practices Connect to the PPN?

- TELUS will install a network router in the practice's wiring closet or telephone room.
- The local area network (LAN) that connects the computers and printers in the practice will need to be plugged into the TELUS router equipment. Practices are responsible for coordinating the connection of their LAN to the PPN with their EMR vendor and local computer support vendor.

## How Do Physicians Connect to the PPN Outside the Practice?

Physicians can connect to the PPN remotely through a VPN which provides a strongly encrypted network "tunnel" into the PPN from a laptop or computer with Internet access. Physicians will access the PPN VPN portal website and enter two passwords to login. One password is remembered, and the other is randomly generated by a "key fob" similar to that used by many physicians to access clinical systems in health authorities. This "two-factor authentication" provides a higher level of security compared to using a single ID and password.

## How Much Does the PPN Service Cost?

Installation and ongoing maintenance of the TELUS router equipment at the practice and use of the remote access PPN VPN service are funded by the Ministry of Health Services as part of the PITO program.

Physicians are responsible for practice-based LAN equipment and cabling which they connect to the TELUS PPN router, as well as the cost of any Internet connection used for remote access outside of the practice. Please visit the PITO website at [www.pito.bc.ca](http://www.pito.bc.ca) for information about PITO's reimbursement guidelines for LAN and other equipment.

## What Standards Must the Practice LAN Meet?

The network and computer equipment within a practice needs to meet PITO security policies to connect to the PPN (see the PITO website for full details). Physicians are responsible for putting these security measures in place and will typically do so with the computer support company that maintains their hardware. Some of the policies include:

- Using computer anti-virus protection. This software is available for download from the Internet for free, or more sophisticated versions can be purchased from stores that sell computer software; and
- Meeting PITO standards for wireless network in practices that choose to implement wireless LANs. .

In addition, practices must:

- Maintain software service packs / patches for operating system and web browser software. This can be set up to occur automatically in most cases; and
- Have ongoing technical support available for their computers and LAN.