

Direct primary care for patients

Outside of appointment time, patient related tasks might include: case conferencing with colleagues around complex patients; completing case notes for a patient's file; reviewing a patient's file before they arrive; reviewing diagnostic imaging and lab reports from specialists; and supervising a student intern.

During appointment time, tasks include: conducting the intake process for new clients; providing direct primary care diagnoses and treatments for immediate needs, episodic issues, and chronic illnesses for clients of all ages; and taking case notes for each patient.

Unscheduled appointment time can include walk-in and phone appointments.

Referrals and government benefit forms and letters

NPs often refer patients to internal or external providers that have better knowledge or scope of practice to deal with a health or social concern, for example: referral to a dietitian, diabetes specialist, or social worker. NPs also advocate on behalf of patients that need to access health and social benefits, for example: patients that are navigating complex social situations may often need letters of proof or support. NPs take the time to research and write these advocacy letters for community or legal organizations and government benefit providers. Some patient appointments are booked specifically for these tasks.

Initiative work

Some NPs may take on special initiatives, such as clinics for non-insured patients, smoking cessation programming, or others. This work may include research, presentations, facilitating workshops, and administrative work.

Income influences a patient's plan of care and NPs are highly attuned to asking patients how they will pay for medications and health interventions. They often encounter questions around paying for medical needs and may not have direct answers, but can provide referrals and make recommendations to patients such as tax filing. NPs often talk to patients about other social determinants to understand their health and income-related needs, for example: asking about housing, nutritional concerns, and food security.

Outside of patient appointments, NPs do not have a lot of flexibility due to other responsibilities such as completing case notes; writing advocacy letters; and filling out government benefit forms.

NPs play a major role in helping people access government benefits through:

1. Determining the duration of a government benefit, such as certain ODSP sub-benefits;
2. Filling out government benefit forms such as WSIB and supplementary forms for OW and ODSP;
3. Connecting patients with affordable treatment solutions; and
4. Writing advocacy letters to community and government organizations for patients who are applying or have been denied benefits and claims.

NPs spend 80% of their time with patients each week, and less time if they are involved with initiative work. Appointments can range from 15 to 60 minutes.

During appointments with patients, NPs are able to talk about different health and social issues that come up for patients. Shorter appointments and those requiring interpreters will typically focus on the patient's most pressing need and reduce flexibility. NPs may refer patients to other providers based on their identified issue(s).

"I think working in an interdisciplinary health team is great. I think it's a fantastic work environment and I think it's sort of the best way to provide good quality patient care and build on everyone's strengths to have better outcomes."

"I think case conferencing is good because then you have the input of others for a complex client that you're sharing with some of the other allied health-care providers. Sometimes a client might not see other health-care providers in the clinic but you think a connection could be made with another provider who offers a different service."

"There are many times where I'm calling the pharmacy with the client to say, 'I need this class of medication, which one is cheapest?'"

Monday to Friday Work Schedule

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9:00 - 9:30	Administrative time	Administrative time	Staff meetings	Administrative time	Administrative time
9:30 - 12:00	Patient appointments	Patient appointments		Patient appointments	Patient appointments
12:00	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
13:00 - 16:30	Patient appointments	Patient appointments	Patient appointments	Patient appointments	Patient appointments
16:30 - 17:00	Administrative time	Administrative time	Administrative time	Administrative time	Administrative time

NPs would not be an ideal candidate for administering the BST because they prioritize providing primary care for patients and play an important role providing referrals and completing benefit forms and advocacy letters. They are an important point of contact for patients who are struggling to make ends meet. NPs decide eligibility for many patients who want to access government

benefits as well as decide on the duration for benefits that will be provided by the government. As decision-makers in the benefits process, some training would be useful. While NPs may not be ideal to implement the BST, they are an important source for referring patients who identify as struggling to make ends meet to an appropriate staff person in a CHC.