



New Rules for Referral Consultation

More timely care is the intent of amended CPSA standard

by Barb Krahn

Referring and consulting physicians may have to make changes to their processes to meet the amended [Referral Consultation](#) standard of practice, after new requirements came into effect on January 1, 2017 following approval by the Council of the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta (CPSA).



College of
Physicians
& Surgeons
of Alberta

To support physicians in implementing the standard, the CPSA has also just published a [Referral Consultation Advice to the Profession](#) document to clarify the new requirements.

New requirements affect both referring and consulting physicians.

The amended standard clarifies the roles and responsibilities of physicians on both sides of the process, promotes better communication between referring and consulting practitioners (physician and non-physician) and mandates timely response to consultation requests.

Key requirements of the new standard include:

- **Referring physicians** must provide all pertinent clinical information and accurate patient contact information with every consultation request, to enable timely triage and response from the consultant. Urgent referrals require direct contact with the consultant.
- **Consulting physicians** are expected to have a reasonably accessible process for receiving consultation requests that is respectful of the time and resources of referring practitioners.



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- **New timeframes** will reduce unnecessary delays in patient care: Consulting physicians now have 7 days to acknowledge a consultation request and 14 days to inform the referring practitioner (and patient, as applicable) whether the request is accepted.
- **Consulting physicians** are responsible to contact the patient and arrange the appointment.

Some physicians have expressed concern about meeting the new timeframes for acknowledging and accepting a consultation request when on vacation or otherwise taking time away from practice. For ideas on how to meet this challenge, physicians are encouraged to refer to the new [Advice](#) document.

Physicians and their staff who have questions about the Referral Consultation standard of practice or advice can also email CPSA Standards of Practice Coordinator chantelle.brigden@cpsa.ab.ca for more information.