Transforming Children Vaccination Reporting Between Primary Care and Public Health: A Scalable, Secure Model to Reduce Administrative Burden and Faxes, and Improve Patient and Provider Experience

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Overview

Primary care organizations in the Frontenac, Lennox & Addington region, in collaboration with Southeast Public Health, implemented a secure and scalable way to improve the sharing of childhood immunization records between primary care and public health. The initiative aimed to reduce reliance on faxing, decrease administrative burden, improve the completeness and timeliness of immunization reporting, improve patient and provider experience and reduce privacy risks associated with faxes.

By enabling monthly bulk electronic sharing of immunization records, the project sought to improve the experience of families by reducing the need for parents and caregivers to submit their children's records to the public health unit themselves and to help prevent unnecessary school and daycare suspensions related to missing records.

The work is tied to the QIP indicator focused on the number of faxes sent per 1,000 rostered patients and reflects a safety-focused improvement effort that benefits patients, primary care teams, public health units, schools and the province.

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Key Elements of Initiative

Change Ideas Tested or Implemented

Primary care organizations securely send bulk childhood immunization records to their public health unit, Southeast Public Health, periodically. They also receive timely records of vaccines administered by the public health unit back, in bulk.

Objective of Change Ideas

Streamline the process for reporting children's immunization records to the public health unit; reduce incomplete reporting and inequities caused by relying on parents/caregivers to submit records; reduce admin burden for both primary care and public heath units, including a reduction in faxes, phone calls, manual work, and privacy risks, improve patient and provider experience, improve patient immunization records completeness.

Team Members Involved

- Primary Care Collaboration and Quality Improvement Lead for the Family Health Teams and Ontario Health Team of the Frontenac Lennox & Addington region; Southeast Public Health's Manager of Health System Liaison, Research Associate, and Immunizations and Logistics teams.

Target Population

- Patients aged 17 and under.

Measurement Progress

Progress is tracked through counts of records securely sent and received electronically, estimated faxes and non-fax requests avoided, estimated time saved, provider and front-office feedback, and public health measures such as notices and suspension orders sent, missing records remaining by suspension day, and immunization-related fax and call volumes.

Implementation Experience: Successes & Challenges

Results/Early Wins

Approximately 80% of providers in the FLA have implemented this new process. Two FHTs and two CHCs in adjacent regions served by the same public health unit have also implemented this new process. The work has avoided thousands of faxes, hundreds of calls and in-person requests, and saved hundreds of hours for primary care nurses, front staff, and office managers and public health unit clerks. The public health unit is expecting to see fewer faxes, phone calls, and manual data-entry demands, while families benefit from fewer record requests, notices, and potentially stressful suspension-related communications.

Enablers of Success

Key enablers included a bridge role between Family Health Teams and the Ontario Health Team, a Public Health Unit primary care liaison role, strong technical skills at the public health unit, strong regional relationships, knowledge of local EMRs and workflows, leadership support, and a collaborative culture.

Challenges and Solutions

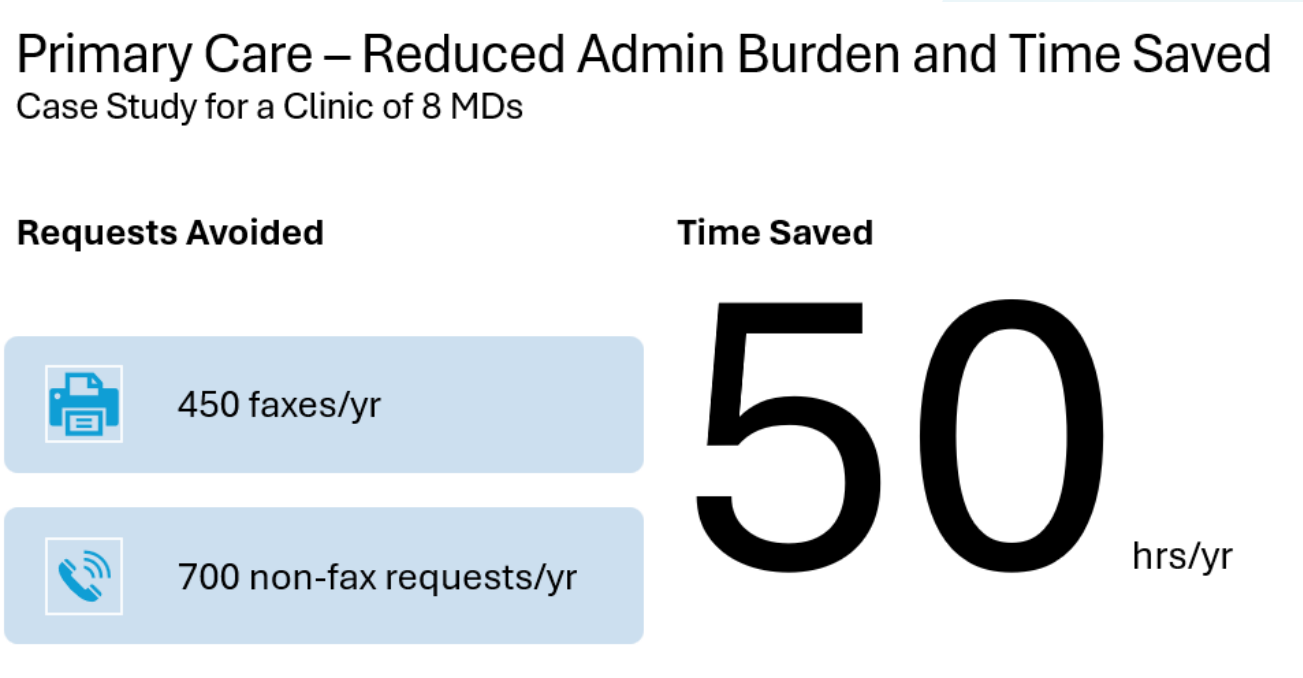
- EMR searches were developed for six EMRs used locally, but not all EMRs have ready searches.
- Scaling to other regions requires identifying the right contacts and walking each organization through the process.
- SEPH has offered to provide records of vaccines they've administered since as far as 2020. This is optional. While this is incredibly valuable, it currently requires manual EMR entry, which is time consuming. Organizations have been reassured that entering historical records is optional and can be completed if and when capacity allows.
- **Advice for Other Teams:** Engage office managers, front staff, and nurses early because the change directly affects their workflows and workload (less work!!). Be available for questions, gather feedback, and ensure all perspectives are heard.

Future Steps & Sustainability

Next Steps and Embedding into Practice

- Next Steps: The team is engaging other Ontario Health Teams and primary care practices, public health units for broader implementation, and asking EMR vendors about options to input vaccines administered by public health units directly into EMRs to reduce manual entry.
- Embedding into Practice: The process is now part of routine workflow for participating organizations, supporting sustainability through regular monthly data-sharing practices and continued regional collaboration.

The Data



- To date, records for > 12,000 children 17 and under and > 134,000 vaccine doses have been received by the public health unit – with nearly 25,000 of which were not previously reported to the public health unit.
- It is estimated so far that around 1,700 children may have otherwise received suspension letters this year as part of the Immunization for School Pupils Act. Another 2,600 children under the age of 4 may have received letters as part of the Child Cares and Early Years Act.
- To date, > 20,000 doses administered by the public health unit to over > 5,000 children have been returned to primary care for entry into their EMRs.

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Please note that many primary care organizations have implemented this new process. Furthermore, the Frontenac, Lennox & Addington OHT has been very supportive in communicating it across the region. We want to acknowledge the collective effort and participation of many organizations that have been instrumental to its success implementation.

Need this information in an accessible format? 1-877-280-8538, TTY 1-800-855-0511, info@OntarioHealth.ca
Document disponible en français en contactant info@OntarioHealth.ca

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