

PARTNER UPDATE

Physician Recruitment

QUARTERLY UPDATE SUMMER 2019



Doctors provide an important and valued service in Nova Scotia. Physician recruitment and retention is a top priority.

Physician recruitment is highly competitive. Nova Scotia competes across Canada and the world for these valuable resources.

We've made significant improvements and enhancements to grow recruitment services. Nova Scotia Health Authority (NSHA) works closely with all those who share responsibility for recruitment and retention to promote Nova Scotia as a place to practice medicine and live a great life.

Many enhancements have been made to the provincial recruitment strategy with a focus on areas of high need. This includes family physicians, emergency medicine, internal medicine, psychiatry, and anesthesiology. We are broadening our reach and visibility, attending more local, national and international events, increasing incentives and bolstering our efforts with medical residents.

PHYSICIAN AMBASSADOR PROFILE



Dr. Joseph Sadek is a psychiatrist in Halifax, Nova Scotia, who received his residency training at Dalhousie University and his psychopharmacology training at Harvard University. For Dr. Sadek, working in Nova Scotia means being part of a supportive and tight-knit community – at home and at work.

When he and his wife first moved to Halifax from Quebec in the early 1990s, developing relationships with his community members and colleagues was a priority, saying “It wasn’t that hard after all with the mix of cultures here.”

Today, he attributes Nova Scotia’s diverse population, low cost of living, and ocean lifestyle to his family’s decision to build their life here. The abundance of universities and extra-curricular activities available make it the perfect province in which to raise a family. “Nova Scotia is our home,” he explains while boasting about the beautiful ocean views and fantastic food you can get all year-round. As a seafood lover and avid competitive soccer team member, there is something for people with all interests.

According to Dr. Sadek, Nova Scotia physicians are able to get this great life because they work as a cohesive team and support each other’s efforts to provide high-quality health care. He believes that with flexibility and openness, anyone is able to live a rewarding life in Nova Scotia.

PARTNERS IN RECRUITMENT

Many groups and organizations have a role in supporting physician recruitment and retention in Nova Scotia including:

- **Nova Scotia Health Authority (NSHA).** We work with physicians and communities to identify potential candidates and recruit family doctors and specialists to live and work in the province. We recruit provincially, nationally and internationally using a wide range of strategies including advertising and marketing, attendance at recruitment events, outreach at medical schools, coordination of site visits and incentives.
- **Department of Health and Wellness (DHW).** DHW is responsible for funding health care spending in the province. They fund physician contracts, set remuneration rates and recruitment incentives. DHW is responsible for provincial physician resource planning and also fund Dalhousie medical school undergraduate and residency seats and incentive programs.
- **College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia (CPSNS).** CPSNS is the regulating body for the province's physicians and surgeons. They work in accordance with the medical act and its regulations. All physicians must be licensed with the college to practice in the province. Their duties include: licensing physicians, investigating and resolving physician related complaints, monitoring and maintaining practice standards through peer assessment, and developing professional standards and guidelines to support medical practice and code of conduct.
- **Dalhousie University (Dal).** Dalhousie University is the province's medical training body and manages the provinces medical training programs and residency sites. Dalhousie works closely with NSHA to ensure opportunities for medical students to work with physician preceptors who supervise medical students and residents. Dalhousie also manages the new Practice Ready Assessment Program which provides a pathway to licensing for International Medical Graduates.
- **Doctors Nova Scotia (DNS).** DNS negotiates physician remuneration with the provincial government, and represents the collective voice of the medical profession on issues that affect physicians.
- **Community stakeholders (foundations, auxiliaries, municipalities, community groups).** These groups support recruitment by developing welcoming communities, assisting with recruitment activities and orienting new hires to our communities.

NSHA implemented our first provincial recruitment strategy in 2017-18 which included focused efforts in several key areas including:

- recruitment team structure
- candidate sourcing and management process
- customer experience training
- recruitment reporting and evaluation process
- communications, marketing and visibility
- community and physician engagement

We held several focus groups with physicians in various stages of their careers to ensure their needs are reflected in our evolving strategy. Physicians are actively involved in recruitment supporting work as physician ambassadors and attending events to help recruit their peers.

In 2018, a new provincial advisory committee was formed to provide advice on innovative strategies for the recruitment and retention of physicians with all relevant partners at the table. This includes representatives from CPSNS, DHW, DNS, Union of Nova Scotia Municipalities, Dal, the College of Family Physicians and the community.

Since assuming provincial oversight for recruitment, we have been putting the people, policies and processes in place to support ongoing recruitment efforts. There will now be two physician recruitment consultant positions in each zone, a lead recruiter, two assistants, a recruiter focused on Dalhousie residents and a provincial director of physician recruitment.

We developed a brand and marketing strategy and launched a new website to make it easier for physicians and specialists to see available opportunities or express interest in future opportunities. The site was developed using physician feedback about their decisions to work and live in Nova Scotia and consultation with the Nova Scotia College of Physicians and Surgeons and Nova Scotia Office of Immigration and was supported by NSHA's provincial recruitment committee. Promotional videos produced and supported by local community groups (interested citizens, foundations, municipal leaders, business people) are integrated in our recruitment materials where ever possible.

NSHA has doubled attendance at local, national and international recruitment events and campus tours across the country. At some events, local communities purchase booth space and pay for citizens and local physicians to attend.

We know that physicians who are trained here are more likely to stay so we continue to partner with Dal for family practice residency training in four sites – Yarmouth, Sydney, Halifax and Annapolis Valley. In 2019, we welcomed a new residency training site in Northern Zone which will have six residents working in Truro, Amherst, New Glasgow and, by 2020, in Antigonish.

We work with DHW and Dal to contribute to physician resource planning and inform the appropriate allocation of residency opportunities in the province. In 2018-19, DHW created 15 new specialist and 10 new family residency spaces in the province. This is a welcome addition when many jurisdictions are limiting new residency spaces.

We are increasing our work with medical students and residents in Nova Scotia to ensure they have a connection to Nova Scotia opportunities and incentives at key intervals through their education and decision making process.

We worked with DHW to revise parameters of incentive programs to better match the changing recruitment areas of need, such as providing access for Halifax and Dartmouth area which was previously ineligible.

We worked with DHW on the new medical physician (MD) process to improve flexibility and create a provincial vacancy pool for new family physicians.

We support government's partnership with University of Sherbrooke to provide two seats to Nova Scotia francophone students, which has resulted in a number of French-speaking physicians joining our workforce.

In 2018, Nova Scotia Office of Immigration (NSOI) created a physician stream through the provincial nominee program making it faster for qualifying physicians to receive work permits and enter the province. We have hosted multiple recruitment events in partnership with NSOI in London and Ireland.

NSHA played a pivotal role in collaborating on a new practice-ready assessment program for internationally-trained doctors, which was launched in 2018. Following successful assessment, these international medical graduates will receive a defined license and be able to practice under certain conditions and supervision.

It takes an entire community to recruit and retain a physician and their family. Many communities have taken an active role in supporting physician recruitment by showcasing their strengths as a place to live, providing a warm welcome to health providers and their families and ensuring they integrate into the community by providing support with housing, employment, social and cultural connections. In June 2018, we established a project team to work with communities, foundations, and auxiliaries to define roles and supports for a collaborative approach to recruitment. In the past year, we met with communities that have organized to support recruitment in their area and to share best practices with others looking to be more involved. This project is ongoing but will strengthen community participation and provide a provincial resource (toolkit) to support local physician recruitment activities.

RECRUITMENT BY THE NUMBERS & FAQs

Year	Family Doctors	Specialists	NZ	WZ	EZ	CZ	Total
2016-17	43	68	19	13	16	63	111
2017-18	38	65	7	20	18	58	103
2018-19	58	72	16	21	23	70	130
	139	205	42	54	57	191	344

What are you doing to recruit physicians?

Recruiting doctors is a priority. We advertise and attend recruitment fairs across Canada and abroad to showcase what makes Nova Scotia a great place to live and work. Our province offers incentives like relocation allowances and return-for-service agreements. We have recruiters in every zone who work with local physicians and communities to support these efforts. We also know that younger doctors are interested in working as part of a team. We are building more family practice teams across Nova Scotia.

Why is there a shortage of doctors?

There are many contributing factors. Doctors, like many health professionals, are in high demand everywhere with global shortages of certain types of physicians. Service delivery models are changing as are how physicians are practicing today compared to the past. Our population's health care needs change as our population ages.

Why don't you just pay doctors more?

Physician pay is set by DHW through the Master Agreements they negotiate with doctors through DNS. They are currently negotiating the Master Agreement which will set physician payment rates and programs. We know that physician compensation is a factor in recruitment – but it is not always the most important factor.

Are you gaining or losing in terms of physician numbers?

We track physician vacancies but are unable to accurately track the number of doctors who retire or leave the province using our current systems. Doctors aren't required to notify us of their retirement and some do not. We do know there are thousands of Nova Scotians who don't have access to a family doctor, and we know there are shortages of certain types of specialists in some communities across the province. So until we are ahead of those issues, our work won't end.

Do you restrict where doctors can practice?

NSHA does not restrict where family doctors practice. Any family doctor with a Nova Scotia license to practice can work in our province. NSHA approves the replacement of every Nova Scotia family doctor who retires or leaves practice for any reason. Many retiring family doctors have a large number of patients in their practice and may need to be replaced with more than one doctor. Specialists can work in an opening anywhere in the province, provided there is a vacancy.