

MOH's "Axe the Fax" Assessment Provincial Information Session FAQs

Monday April 11th – Wednesday April 13th, 2022

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GENERAL

1. What is the “Axe the Fax” Assessment?

- The Ministry of Health (MOH) has initiated an analysis of the current state and drivers of fax use to identify potential options for phasing out fax use in Ontario’s health system.
- While the challenges associated with fax are widely recognized by key stakeholders across Ontario’s health sector, the full magnitude, scope, and complexity of the problem are not currently known.
- To formulate potential options for replacing fax use in Ontario’s health sector, a detailed understanding of current fax use in Ontario’s health system needs to be assessed.
- Fax modernization would help advance the MOH’s priority to enable effective and timely sharing of information between health care providers and support smooth transitions of care for patients across settings in Ontario.

2. Does the scope of data collection for the “Axe the Fax” Assessment include traditional paper-based fax and electronic fax (e-fax)?

- The scope of the “Axe the Fax” Assessment includes collecting data and information on the current use of both traditional paper-based fax and e-fax.
- As the “Axe the Fax” Assessment is in the early stages to collect data and information on the current state of fax use in Ontario, to inform potential options for fax modernization, the scope of a prospective “Axe the Fax” implementation approach is not yet known or confirmed.

3. Will the “Axe the Fax” Assessment include a review of what other jurisdictions are doing?

- Yes, as part of Phase 1 (Current State Assessment), the “Axe the Fax” Assessment will include an environmental scan looking at fax modernization efforts in other jurisdictions, both across Canada and internationally, especially in the health care context.

4. Why is the “Axe the Fax” Assessment happening now, given other priorities (e.g., COVID-19 recovery, burnt out workforce, etc.)?

- The reduction of fax use in the health sector is important to the MOH. The “Axe the Fax” Assessment supports the MOH’s Digital First for Health (DFfH) strategy to enable better, more connected tools for frontline providers, while also advancing the province’s commitment to enable effective and timely sharing of information between health care providers and support smooth transitions of care for patients.
- The assessment will draw upon lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and conduct **early planning** to collect information and input from health system stakeholders to help inform potential options for fax modernization across the Ontario health landscape.
- For example, the pandemic highlighted the administrative burden of fax use, contributing to staff burnout. Through preliminary research, it has been identified that labs experienced a significant increase in lab requisition fax volumes, which contributed to staff burnout.
- The pandemic has also accelerated the implementation and adoption of digital tools for certain health services, where the assessment will continue to build on this momentum when exploring potential options for fax modernization.

5. Will the “Axe the Fax” Assessment consider the potential reduction in fax use for all faxing scenarios / use cases?

- The assessment aims to identify the **top use cases / reasons for fax use that represent the majority of fax volumes**, recognizing there are nuances where fax use may potentially be necessary to support the delivery of patient care.
- Through stakeholder engagement activities (i.e., provincial survey and focus group interviews), various health system stakeholders will be engaged to better understand what the top use cases are in Ontario, as well as the scenarios in which fax may be necessary, to understand where fax reduction opportunities lie.

6. How will the “Axe the Fax” Assessment consider integration with existing solutions (e.g., existing technologies, infrastructure) that are deployed across health care organizations?

- There is a commitment to not duplicate services, governance, or investments as a result of this, and to leverage existing solutions or processes that are in place today.
- In order to do that, the stakeholder engagement activities (i.e., provincial survey and focus group interviews) will gather a deeper understanding of which technologies and solutions are available that can be leveraged to drive fax reduction (e.g., eConsult, eReferral, ePrescribing, EMRs).
- The “Axe the Fax” Assessment will include focus group interviews with various health system stakeholders, such as digital health delivery partners and digital health vendors to better understand the existing solutions and potential opportunities.
- In addition, stakeholders involved in related initiatives to understand potential alignment and where future work can build on the progress achieved to date from these initiatives will be engaged as part of the assessment.

7. What is the future work related to this assessment?

- The “Axe the Fax” Assessment is exploratory to collect information and input from various health system stakeholders to help inform potential future options for reducing fax burden across the Ontario health landscape.
- As such, the parameters for any prospective future implementation work are not yet known or confirmed.

8. Will I be mandated to “Axe the Fax” and will funding be provided?

- The “Axe the Fax” Assessment is exploratory. The focus is on collecting information and input from various health system stakeholders to help identify potential future options for reducing fax burden in the Ontario health landscape.
- When evaluating potential options for fax modernization, the assessment will consider potential cost and funding implications.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

9. Who is being engaged as part of the “Axe the Fax” Assessment?

- Through the provincial survey and targeted focus group interviews, various health system stakeholders and digital health vendors will be engaged to obtain a comprehensive view of fax use in Ontario.
- The provincial survey will be sent to fax users (individually or organizationally) to gather preliminary quantitative and qualitative information on fax use.
- A series of targeted focus group interviews will be conducted to gather additional insights from health care providers and support services (e.g., nurses, pharmacists, lab staff, home and community care providers), family medicine practitioners, clinical specialists, patient and family advisors, digital health delivery partners, health care associations and regulatory groups, local / regional health leads and representatives, and digital health vendors.

10. What was the process to select survey respondents?

- The survey was sent to identified individuals across a broad range of care settings, including primary care, acute care, pharmacy, lab, diagnostic imaging facilities, public health, specialists, and home and community care to gather insights from individuals who are the users of fax.
- Various member organizations and associations were engaged to distribute the provincial survey link among their members.
- Please refer to the survey section of this FAQ document for additional information on the survey.

11. What was the process to select focus group interview attendees?

- Focus group interview attendees were selected based on their knowledge of and experience with fax use across various care settings and geographies (e.g., urban vs. rural).
- Key stakeholder groups identified through preliminary research and jurisdictional scan includes health care providers and support services (e.g., nurses, pharmacists, lab staff, home and community care providers), family medicine practitioners, clinical specialists, patient and family advisors,

digital health delivery partners, health care associations and regulatory groups, local / regional health leads and representatives, and digital health vendors.

- Various member organizations and associations were engaged to determine focus group participants.
- Individuals that have been asked to participate in a focus group interview should represent their organization / association and speak to feedback on fax use from other key stakeholders.

12. Is there an opportunity for me to join a focus group and provide my experience with fax use?

- Each focus group interview will comprise of select representatives to ensure productive dialogue and open discussion. The small group setting is aimed at enabling each participant to share perspectives so that the dialogue can be as productive as possible for the participants.
- Individuals that have been asked to participate in a focus group interview should represent their organization / association and speak to feedback on fax use from their peers. Focus group participants are asked to share the interview questions with their colleagues / peers and solicit feedback from them prior to joining the focus group interview.
- The provincial survey link is open to health care providers and organizations to provide information on their experience using fax. If you are not part of a focus group, please share your thoughts through the survey. If you have additional thoughts once you complete the survey, you can contact the “Axe the Fax” project team (ATFprojectteam@deloitte.ca).

13. How are patients and families being engaged in the “Axe the Fax” Assessment?

- The aim of the “Axe the Fax” Assessment is to understand the current fax use across Ontario’s health sector, and the unique needs and perspectives of the key health system stakeholders involved in fax use, including patients and their family caregivers.
- Patient and caregiver representatives will be engaged for input through focus groups, where the impact of current fax use on their patient experience will be discussed along with their vision of a desired future state for modernizing fax use in health care.

14. How will the “Axe the Fax” Assessment account for health equity and consider the impact on remote areas?

- The “Axe the Fax” Assessment will engage health system stakeholders through stakeholder engagement activities (i.e., provincial survey and focus group interviews), across various geographies to consider the impact on fax use in remote areas and across diverse populations.

SURVEY

15. Who received the survey and who should be completing the survey?

- The survey was sent to identified individuals across a broad range of care settings and professions. These individuals would have received the link directly or through an intermediary (e.g., associations and regulatory colleges). Individuals can work with others within their organization and / or practice to complete the survey.
- The survey should be completed by individuals who currently use fax and have knowledge of key information, such as:
 - Key drivers / reasons for continued fax use.
 - Impact of fax use, such as time spent sending / receiving / sorting faxes and financial costs associated with fax use.
 - Estimated fax volume by stakeholder and primary reasons for using fax.
- This may include individuals responding on behalf of a singular practice (e.g., clinic, unit, lab, pharmacy, home care facility, specialist clinic) that is part of a larger organization, as well as individuals responding on behalf of an entire organization (e.g., all areas of your hospital, all physicians within your family health team, all units of your mental health centre).
- For example, in an acute care setting, organizations are asked to assign a point of contact to respond on behalf of the hospital. This individual may work with Digital and / or Decision Support executives and teams to gather the required information at the organizational level
- For a specialist working in a hospital, they should respond to the survey on behalf of their singular practice (e.g., specialist clinic).

16. Can I send the survey to other individuals within my organization / practice?

- For organizational-level information, it is recommended to assign a point of contact to respond on behalf of the entire organization (e.g., entire hospital, all physicians within a family health team, all units in a mental health centre). It is also recommended to share the survey with users of fax to gather their perspective based on their individual practice (e.g., specialist clinic in a hospital).

17. Will my survey questions be saved if I leave / exit the survey?

- Yes, survey responses will be saved to allow you to leave and come back to finish the survey at any point before the survey closure date (i.e., Wednesday, May 4th at 11:59 pm EST).
- Please note you will need to use the same internet browser to save your survey responses. For example, if you begin to fill out the survey in Chrome then leave / exit the survey, you can re-enter the survey link in Chrome to pick up where you left off.

18. What information will be collected from the survey?

- **Background information:** Information related to your care setting, organization, region, and role.
- **Organizational / practice-level information:** Information on fax use at the organizational or practice-level, such as:
 - Total volume of faxes sent and received (per 7-day week).
 - Time spent by staff sending / receiving / sorting faxes (hours per day).
 - Financial costs associated with fax use (estimated monthly financial costs).
- **Feedback on fax use:** Insights into your personal experience with or perspective on using fax.

19. Can I complete the survey using my smartphone?

- Yes, you can complete the survey using your smartphone. For best user experience, it is recommended to complete the survey on a computer, using Chrome as the preferred browser.

20. Can I complete the survey on another browser (i.e., not Chrome)?

- Yes, you can complete the survey using other browsers. For the best user experience, Chrome is recommended.

21. If I work in multiple care settings, can I complete the survey more than once with a different perspective?

- Yes, you can complete the survey more than once from a different care setting perspective, if desired. Please fill out the survey based on the perspective of the care setting you work most frequently at.

22. How long do I have to complete the survey?

- You will have three weeks to complete the survey. The survey will close on Wednesday, May 4th at 11:59 pm EST.

23. Will my survey responses be kept anonymous?

- Yes, the information provided in this survey will be kept anonymous. Please note that data trends and direct quotes may be used to illustrate fax use in a subsequent Current State Assessment report.

24. Can I receive a PDF of the survey questions?

- If you would like to receive a PDF of the survey questions, please contact the “Axe the Fax” project team (ATFprojectteam@deloitte.ca).
- Please do NOT use the PDF to submit your survey responses. Only responses provided via the Qualtrics survey link (https://bit.ly/ON_ATF_SURVEY) will be analyzed as part of the Current State Assessment report.