

# Physician Associations: Getting Started

## Setting up your physician association & physician association agreement

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### Membership

#### Who should be part of our physician association?

All local physicians, including family doctors and specialists (both those who work in the community and in hospitals), should be encouraged to join your physician association (or network) to ensure a unified voice for all physicians.

Broad representation on your physician association means that members will be able to share a broad range of physician perspectives when they sit at local governance tables. When both family doctors and specialists are involved, it benefits the health system by ensuring that a broad range of perspectives are represented.

Physicians who are not yet committed to the idea of OHTs can be part of your physician association – getting involved with the association doesn't automatically sign them up for participating in the OHT.

### Group Structure

Your physician association will be made up of a leadership group (sometimes called a Governance Committee or Board), and members. Most decisions made by the physician association will be voted on by the leadership group with input from members. For more information on organizing your leadership team, refer to leadership group one pager.

#### Should we have sub-committees?

Your physician association may choose to organize into sub-committees, working groups, or other sub-groupings to work on specific topics or by specialty or practice type.

If you are considering sub-groupings, think about:

- Will these groupings be permanently written into the physician association agreement?
- If these groupings are permanent, will a member from each sub-committee/grouping be part of the physician association leadership group? If yes, what are the consequences of this on the size of the leadership group?

## Paperwork

### Do we need to have an agreement or contract for our members?

Yes. A physician association agreement is a document that lays out ground rules for how your group will function. For example, how the leaders of the group will be chosen, how often the group will meet, etc. By signing the agreement, a physician agrees that they want to join the association and that they agree with the rules of operation for the group.

Signing a physician association agreement doesn't mean a physician must actively participate in all meetings and activities of the association, nor does it mean they agree to participate in the local OHT. A physician can choose to withdraw from a physician association at any time.



**A physician association agreement** is a document that outlines how your physician association operates.

### What is the difference between a physician association agreement and a terms of reference?

A physician association agreement and a terms of reference both set out rules around how your physician association will organize and make decisions.

Initially, when a small group of individuals come together locally to start a physician association, they should create a terms of reference to show that they will operate in a fair and transparent manner. Terms of reference that outline the rules of the group offer a sense of legitimacy.

Over time, as the physician association begins to attract more members and the larger membership decides how the group will operate, a physician association agreement should be drafted. When a physician association agreement is adopted, the terms of reference that were created to initially guide the group can be retired.

If your group has already drafted a physician association agreement, you do not need to go back and create a terms of reference.

[Access a sample terms of reference.](#)

[Access a sample physician association agreement.](#)