

What is CritiCall Ontario?

- CritiCall Ontario is a one number to call, 24/7/365 emergency **consultation** and **referral service** for hospital-based physicians in Ontario caring for critically ill patients.
- CritiCall Ontario seeks to help hospital physicians by facilitating consultations with medical specialists and/or referral decisions for emergent, urgent and critically ill patients to appropriate levels of care within Ontario and outside of the province if necessary.
- It is the only service of its kind in Ontario and is unique within Canada.

CritiCall Ontario also:

- Provides service and support to hospitals to manage moderate to major surge capacity in the event of a pandemic, disaster or other occurrence that may require extensive patient movement or unit decanting.
- Facilitates the repatriation of patients sent outside of the province via CritiCall back to Ontario for the remainder of their care.
- Provides administrative, technical, training and education for the Critical Care Information System (CCIS).
- Utilizes a bed management tool that documents the “status of” and “access to” acute care beds within Ontario.

Who we serve

- Any hospital-based physician within Ontario can phone if they require assistance caring for a critically ill or injured patient. This assistance could be in the form of advice from a specialist physician or surgeon and/or possibly a referral for the patient to another hospital with the required patient care resources.
- CritiCall also works with hospitals and critical care service providers in provinces and states bordering Ontario including Manitoba, Michigan and New York, to expedite urgent and emergent care for Ontario patients when necessary.
- Physicians can access a broad range of specialists through CritiCall Ontario who can provide consultations for **more than 30 different medical subspecialties** including burns, cardiology, gastroenterology, neurosurgery, ophthalmology, spinal, and plastic surgery.

How does CritiCall's service work?

CritiCall Ontario operates a Call Centre, staffed by Call Agents trained in medical call management.

Call Agents facilitate calls but do not make medical decisions.

The process is outlined below:

- A hospital-based physician or designate calls CritiCall at **1-800-668-4357 (HELP)**
- The CritiCall Call Agent asks the physician or designate for their name, hospital site and location, contact phone number and the name of the most responsible physician (MRP)
- The MRP provides his/her College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO) number
- Patient information requested may include: patient's name, birth date, sex, area of residence, location of the patient within the hospital, initial diagnosis and specialty specific questions including pertinent medical history, medications, etc.
- The MRP will also be asked if other physicians or hospitals have already been contacted
- The Call Agent will refer to the consult referral cluster to determine options based on specialists available and where they practice within the province
- The first call will be a request for consultation and following consultation, either the patient will stay in the home hospital with management or the patient will be referred to a hospital with the level of care required
- If referral is required, the first (consulting) physician will be asked to receive the patient; if the physician is unable, the Call Agent will contact other sites in the home hospital's cluster of care
- The order of referral options depends on the location of the home hospital, patient urgency and the current system capacity
- The calling hospital site will be updated every 60 minutes by the Call Agent (*please note, the physician should phone back if the patient's condition deteriorates in that timeframe*)
- If there has been no referral acceptance after 60 minutes, a CritiCall Medical Director may be contacted to escalate a decision

What if a patient needs to be sent out of Ontario?

- If the necessary resources are unavailable or inaccessible within Ontario (due to geography, weather, time constraints, etc.), CritiCall may facilitate the transfer of a patient out of province (to another province or the United States).
- CritiCall works with the sending hospital and specialist consultant to identify the most appropriate hospital for the patient and to ensure all of the necessary paperwork is complete.
- Within 48 hours of the patient's transfer, CritiCall will follow up to begin the process of bringing the patient back to Ontario.
- The selection of the acute care hospital for the remainder of the patient's care is based on the patient's condition and the philosophy that the remainder of care should be delivered as close to home as possible within Ontario.
- CritiCall works with case workers at the out of province hospital and staff at the most appropriate Ontario hospital to arrange for the patient's repatriation.

Benefits of using CritiCall Ontario

CritiCall Ontario is funded by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and is a resource for physicians.

We offer:

- **One phone call to access critical care support** (CritiCall will make multiple calls on behalf of the calling physician to find a specialist who can provide a consultation; this saves physicians time that can be better spent caring for patients)
- **Patient documentation and collection of data** (every call CritiCall receives and initiates is recorded and all information regarding consultations and referrals is documented and compiled into reports that can be used to assist in health care planning at the hospital, LHIN and provincial level; this approach contributes to increased quality management)
- **Maximization of health care resources** (for physicians in community hospitals, CritiCall is a vital link to the resources of larger tertiary care hospitals in their region and the province)
- **A system-approach to accessing patient care**

Fast Facts 2009/2010

- Number of calls to CritiCall Ontario: 16,491
- Number of patients transferred: 9,798
- Number of patients not transferred: 6,693
- Average number of calls made per case: 12
- Average time to patient acceptance: 56 (min.)

The History of CritiCall Ontario

- In 1988, Hamilton-based physician, Dr. Frank Baillie, pioneered the development of the Regional Emergency Access to On-Call Health Professionals program (REACH) to facilitate emergency patient referrals within Central West Ontario. Partnerships with Hamilton’s tertiary care centres and their commitment to effectively supporting the community hospitals within the region resulted in the creation of a successful program that was then modeled in Thunder Bay (Criticall), Toronto (TCAP), Ottawa (ONTC) and Kingston (KAARL).
- Dr. Baillie championed the creation of Canada’s first central bed registry, linking four Hamilton hospitals. In 1988, this system was enhanced to include physician contact information and proved to be an invaluable resource for managing emergency patient referrals.
- In 1995, the MoHLTC recognized the need to link all provincial emergency referral programs at one central site. One call centre and one provincial bed registry were created and the name CritiCall was adopted.
- On April 1, 1996, CritiCall became Ontario’s only emergency patient referral program.
- CritiCall Ontario is based in Hamilton, Ontario with satellite offices throughout the province.

For more information about CritiCall Ontario, please visit our website at www.criticall.org or call (289) 396-7000.