



Questions To Ask Your Local IT Provider

This document offers suggestions to help select local information technology (IT) support for a primary care clinic. Choosing a local IT vendor can vary based on your personal preference such as the local IT's communication style as well as clinic's requirements. Below are tips to get your started.

Assess Your Clinic Needs

- What technology is currently used at the clinic? EMR, file storage, email, accounting, telehealth?
- What is the clinic's system composition: computers, printers, network devices?
- What level of computer expertise is available in-house to support the clinic?
- Is there an appropriately skilled individual(s) to assist as your clinic's Security Lead?
- Does the clinic need IT support past typical business hours?
- How quickly is a response expected for critical issues and non-critical issues?
- Will the clinic's physicians work from home?
- What are other plans for the clinic: new staff, new equipment, new technologies?

Assess IT Support Company Experience

- Does the IT support staff have current certifications in operating systems and networking?
- Does the IT support company have at least five years of experience working with networks in the medical field? Have they worked with clinics on the Private Physicians Network (PPN)?
- Is the IT support staff skilled in the installation and maintenance of wireless networks?
- Does the IT support company have knowledge of encryption and user authentication to manage access?
- Is the IT support company capable to design and implement information backup and recovery procedures?
- Will the IT support company ensure a complete restoration of critical information in the event of a disaster?
- What is their experience with computer and cyberattacks in the medical field?
- What is the IT support company experience in assisting with security/privacy breach investigations?
- Can they share examples of documented processes for implementing security measures?
- What was their most challenging experience in their IT support practice and how did they solved it? Consider how the 'bad news' is delivered.
- Is the IT support company familiar with Canadian privacy regulations: Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA), Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA), Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA)?
- Does the IT support company have a business license and the proper insurance?
- Will assigned IT support staff sign confidentiality agreements? Agreements can be found under Tools and Resources on the DTO website, [Physician Office IT Security](#) section.
- Is the IT support staff familiar with the tools are resources offered by the DTO such as the [Physician Office IT Security Guide](#) and Technical Bulletins?

Ask Service-Related Questions

- What kind of coverage does the IT support company provide? Over the phone, remote desktop, on-site?
- Does the IT support company provide guaranteed response times in their service agreement? What is their coverage on weekdays, after-hours, weekends?
- Does the IT support company sell computer equipment and supplies? Is it required to buy from them?
- Will the IT support company complete and maintain the following documentation and provide samples:
 - An office map showing the physical location of equipment;
 - Specifications, and purchase/warranty information for technology equipment;
 - Software inventory including licences, certificates, renewal dates, and contact information;
 - A network scheme showing the logical location of connected clinic systems for rapid troubleshooting;
 - Logs for adding and changing of equipment and software including configuration details;
 - Device disposal logs;
 - Monitoring logs for user access, system performance, backup testing and restoring history.
- Is the IT support company capable to assist in privacy breach investigations?
- Can they provide examples of how responsive their service is? For example, easy ways to contact directly, reporting on progress or delays? Will they provide relevant references?

Contracts, Invoicing, and Cost

- What is covered in the support agreement? What is not covered? Support may include hardware, software (including patches), network monitoring, staff training, strategic planning.
- What are the contract cancellation terms?
- How does the IT support company invoice services? Is it a fixed price? Is it a monthly or yearly contract regardless of support required? Is it through an hourly rate?
- Is the rate depended on service type? Many IT support companies offer a choice of service levels to suit different budgets and requirements:

Pay-as-you-go: the clinic pays an hourly rate or a fixed price (can be more expensive in the long run).

Break-fix: charged hourly or offered on a fixed price contract like an insurance policy.

Managed service: the IT support company actively manages your clinic systems (involves signing an annual support contract).

Parts included: the IT support company fixes hardware problems at their cost (more typical for equipment manufacturers).

Please Note: This guide provides a general information only. Doctors Technology Office (DTO) has created a comprehensive [Physician Office IT Security Guide](#) that should be shared with technology support providers. To access the Guide and additional clinic IT and support resources, go to the [DTO's website](#) (see link below).

For more information, guidance or support contact:

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