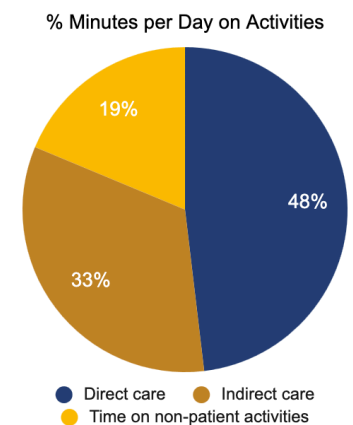


## What do social workers do in the PCN?

Social workers (SWs) support primary care providers (PCPs) and patients and play a critical role in the PCN. In the Kootenay Boundary PCN, they focus primarily on patient counselling, form completion, system navigation and referral to resources. SWs in the PCN are available by referral and through direct patient booking (without a PCP referral). They improve access and attachment by:

- **Providing counselling for mild to moderate mental health patients (19% of appts):** SWs offer short-term therapeutic support for issues like anxiety, grief, adjusting to a diagnosis, and other life stresses; helping patients stabilize while awaiting more specialized services; and reducing demand for these services. By independently supporting patients who need psychosocial care, SWs free up PCPs for higher-acuity cases.
- **Completing essential forms for patients with high SDH vulnerabilities (17.5% of appts):** Disability paperwork, housing applications, income support, and medical leave forms require time-consuming documentation. SWs take on this task, which is burdensome for PCPs and critical for patient wellbeing.
- **Offering general advice, health system navigation and referral to community and specialized resources (8.1% of appts):** They educate patients on topics such as coping skills, caregiver support, and community services, improving self-management and system confidence. SWs connect patients with mental health, housing, financial, legal, and other social supports that are crucial to overall health.
- **Patient assessment (6.6% of appts):** Initial assessment to determine patient needs and appropriateness for various services/resources, and to flag PCPs regarding urgent issues.



## Social worker metrics

Social workers (SWs) support attachment by doing appointments that a PCP would otherwise do, and by reducing demand for appointments by improving patient health and access to other resources. The KB PCN has 14 SWs serving 95 primary care providers. Since the beginning of PCN, SWs have completed 29,995 appointments with an average wait time of 12 days. On average, each PCN SW sees 110 unique patients and does 225 encounters quarterly (900/ year).

## Freeing up PCP Time

If 50% of SW appointments would have been done by a PCP, each SW creates room for the attachment of 75 more patients. SWs spend an average of 5% to 18% of their time completing forms for patients. Without their support, this responsibility would fall to PCPs, adding an estimated 24 to 86 minutes of administrative work per day. By offloading this task to a social worker, this potentially frees up time for one to five additional patient appointments daily. One PCP commented: “It markedly reduces our workload to have direct bookings.” Another observed, “Patients directly booked with the Social Worker are able to have earlier intervention with community resources. There’s earlier identification of the people who are at risk.”