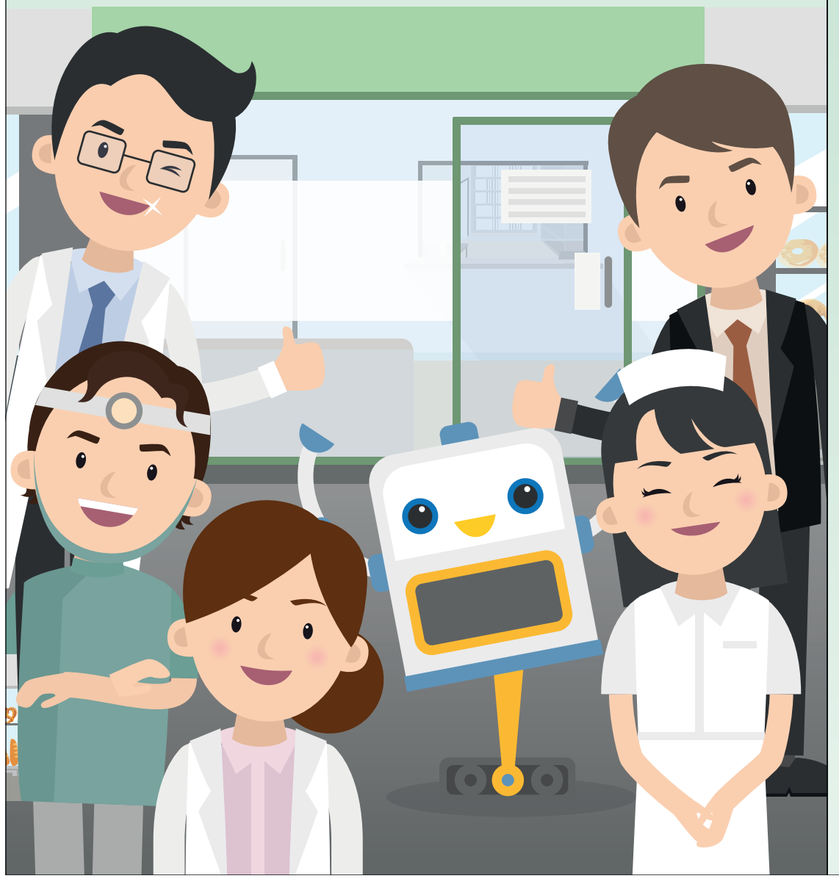
Department of Health

Private Healthcare Facilities Ordinance

Clinics



Clinic

- Under the “Private Healthcare Facilities Ordinance” (Cap. 633) (PHFO), clinics are premises where registered medical practitioners or registered dentists provide medical services without lodging, and continuous confinement of patients within the clinic should not exceed 12 hours. Furthermore, clinics cannot receive pregnant women for childbirth or women immediately after childbirth.
- The key difference between a clinic and a day procedure centre is that, apart from providing general clinic services and minor medical procedures, scheduled medical procedures specified under the PHFO or the hospital-only medical procedures stipulated in the “Code of Practice for Day Procedure Centres” should not be carried out in a clinic.

Scheduled Medical Procedures and Minor Medical Procedures

- As specified in the PHFO, scheduled medical procedures are medical procedures that are carried out in ambulatory settings and entail a higher level of risk. (Please refer to Section 2 of the PHFO on interpretation of scheduled medical procedures and Column 2 of Schedule 3 to the PHFO on the particular medical procedures under classes of specialized services or the information materials on day procedure centres for details.)
- Minor medical procedures are medical procedures carried out in ambulatory settings, which are not scheduled medical procedures. (Please refer to Section 2 of the PHFO on the interpretation of minor medical procedures and the medical procedures as described in Column 3 of Schedule 3 to the PHFO.)

Application for Clinic Licence

- Except for small practice clinic (SPC), clinics, including but not limited to scheduled clinics listed in Schedule 6 to the PHFO, must apply for a licence.
- A clinic meeting the requirements of SPC may ask the Director of Health for a letter of exemption. For details, please refer to the information materials on small practice clinics.
- Application for clinic licence has started since 13 October 2025.

Transitional Arrangement

- Under the PHFO, before the Secretary for Health announces the commencement of the penalty clauses by notice published in the Gazette, the operator may continue to operate the clinic. We will announce the implementation of the relevant penalty clauses in due course. In this connection, operators should familiarise themselves with the PHFO and prepare to apply for a licence as early as possible, to ensure that the clinic is licensed before the penalty clauses come into effect.
- A clinic that has already been in operation at the address on 30 November 2018, upon application for a clinic licence, will be issued a provisional licence subject to meeting of the criteria as set out in Section 136(2) of the PHFO.
- Clinics issued with provisional licences may continue to operate legally until a full licence is issued, or when the application is withdrawn or rejected, or the Secretary for Health notifies by notice published in the Gazette the date on which the transitional arrangement expires.
- In order to provide sufficient preparation time for the industry, the expiry date of the transitional arrangement will be at least one year after the date on which the notice is published.

Application for Provisional Licence

- To be eligible for a provisional licence, the operator must submit an application for a licence within the period specified from 13 October 2025 to 13 April 2026, and provide information to prove that the clinic has already been in operation at the address on 30 November 2018.
- If a clinic only came into operation or has been relocated to any new premises after 30 November 2018, the eligibility for a provisional licence will be lost and the clinic will need to apply for a full licence.

The Responsibilities of the Licensee of a Clinic

- The licensee is wholly responsible for the operation of the clinic;
- Ensuring that the clinic complies with the requirements of the PHFO, licence and the "Code of Practice for Clinics";
- Appointing a chief medical executive (CME) for the clinic;
- Setting up and enforcing rules, policies and procedures relating to the quality of care for, and the safety of, patients in the clinic;
- Making available to the public information about the prices of chargeable items and services provided in the clinic; and
- Putting in place complaints handling procedures.

The Responsibilities and Requirements of the CME of a Clinic

- The CME is responsible for the day to day administration of the clinic.
- The responsibilities of the CME include adoption and implementation of the rules, policies and procedures concerning healthcare services provided in the clinic.
- For a clinic with medical practice, the CME must be a registered medical practitioner. If the clinic also provides dental practice, the licensee must also appoint a registered dentist to assist the CME (registered medical practitioner) in carrying out the day to day administration of the dental practice.
- For a clinic with only dental practice, the CME must be a registered dentist.
- The CME of a clinic must be a registered medical practitioner or a registered dentist who has been registered for not less than four years in Hong Kong; and must not serve at the same time as the CME of a hospital, or of more than three clinics, or of more than one DPC and one clinic.
- The PHFO does not prohibit having the same person as the licensee and the CME.

A Single CME Appointed for Four or More Clinics

- If four or more clinics are operated at the same time by the same licensee, the licensee may appoint a single CME for this group of clinics, provided that this appointed CME is a registered medical practitioner or a registered dentist who has been registered in Hong Kong for not less than eight years and is not serving at the same time as the CME of another private healthcare facility.
- Furthermore, the licensee has to establish a Medical Advisory Committee for this group of clinics, and appoint for each clinic in the group a registered medical practitioner or a registered dentist, who is serving at the clinic, to assist the CME in carrying out the day to day administration of the clinic. For details, please refer to the information on requirements for governance and premises of private healthcare facilities.

Validity Period of a Clinic Licence

- Under normal circumstances, the licence of a clinic is valid for five years and the licence of a scheduled clinic listed in Schedule 6 to the PHFO is valid for one year.

Other Information

- Materials on the following subjects under the PHFO are available:
  - Private Healthcare Facilities Ordinance
  - Day Procedure Centres
  - Small Practice Clinics
  - Requirements for governance and premises of private healthcare facilities
- Details are available at www.orphf.gov.hk (accessible by scanning this QR code).