A panel is the formal link and long-term, ongoing relationship between primary care physicians and providers and their patients. Panel size is the number of individual patients under the care of a specific provider. A standard panel size for all family physicians does not exist, but physicians can define their ideal panel size using approaches that take into account the supply and demand of services in their local context.

Establishing a manageable panel size is necessary when balancing the workload for a busy practice. There is evidence that the quality of care, access to services, and continuity of care decreases when family physicians care for too many patients. Alternatively, if a panel size is not large enough, the family physician may not be able to financially support their practice and there might be increased unmet community need.