

FRENCH LANGUAGE HEALTH SERVICES STRATEGY 2016-2019



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I. Introduction

This document sets out a three-year strategy for improving access to French language health services, main challenge faced by Francophones in the Champlain and South East regions. The strategy will help to guide the decisions and actions of the Champlain and South East Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) toward achieving the French language service goals set out in their 2016–2019 Integrated Health Services Plans (IHSPs). The strategy will also provide information to the various system stakeholders involved in improving French language services so that their resources can be aligned with local objectives and used efficiently.

Partners

Three partners will work together to advance the strategy: the Champlain LHIN, the South East LHIN and the French Language Health Services Network of Eastern Ontario (the Réseau). The Champlain and South East LHINs are each responsible for local health system planning, coordination, integration, and funding in their respective regions. Their actions are rooted in their strategic plans, called *Integrated Health Services Plans*. These plans set out broad objectives for the local healthcare system, as well as specific objectives for the Francophone community. Although the major objectives of the two LHINs are similar, their practices, local challenges and Francophone community situations are different.

As health service planning entity, the Réseau is mandated with advising the LHINs on French language service planning, decision-making, and implementation. It also supports health service providers as they work to develop French language services.

All three partners rely on the commitment of the Francophone community and system stakeholders to understand their needs, their challenges, and their experiences in terms of access to French language health services.

A. Champlain LHIN IHSP

The Champlain LHIN's strategic directions for 2016-2019 are:

- 1) Integration: Improve the patient and family experience across the continuum of care
- 2) Access: Ensure health services are timely and equitable
- 3) Sustainability: Increase the value of our healthcare system for the people it serves

The objectives specific to the Francophone community under the strategic direction of access are to provide linguistically and culturally appropriate care; to understand and respond to the unique needs of Francophones; to promote improvement and efficiency in the delivery of French language services; and to identify and eliminate gaps in these services.

Success indicators call for Francophones to be engaged in the development of services that address their unique needs and to receive linguistically appropriate health services.

B. South East LHIN IHSP

The South East LHIN's overarching goals for 2016-2019 are:

- 1) Achieving better patient outcomes through more equitable access to quality care
- 2) Improving the healthcare experience through an integrated and patient-centred continuum of care
- 3) Working with partners towards the achievement of an accountable, high-performing health care system

The objectives specific to the Francophone community are to increase French language health services throughout the region through collaboration, education and productive, two-way communication; to strengthen partnerships; to include the needs and priorities of the Francophone community in planning; and to ensure that patients have the opportunity to access health services in French.

C. Réseau Strategic Planning

The Réseau's strategic goals for 2016-2021 are:

- 1) To contribute to the production of reliable data and to incorporate it into the development of solid rationales and the demonstration of measurable results
- 2) To participate early in change initiatives related to healthcare system transformation to steer French language service planning
- 3) To expand our sphere of influence through collaboration with new partners
- 4) To engage with Francophone communities to guarantee their participation in the healthcare system by implementing an engagement model tailored for them
- 5) To communicate practical and useful information that will empower Francophones to take charge of their own health and to more easily access high-quality French language health services

The ultimate goal of the strategic plan is for Francophones to have access to high-quality French language health services. The plan proposes to achieve this goal by improving the offer of French language services and by encouraging Francophones to request and use French language health services.

II. Goal of the Strategy

Access involves a number of factors and stakeholders, including some that are beyond the scope of the healthcare system. Although we cannot cover all of them, we believe that there are three elements that are vital to access to French language services: active offer, information on French language services, and the performance of French language services. These three elements are our strategic goals.

Access requires not only that French language services exist, but also that patients and clients are able to use them. For this reason, patients and clients must play a fundamental role in defining their needs and challenges and in contributing to the assessment of improvements to access. This strategy promotes a person-centred approach, which ensures that Francophones have a voice in their care, in the planning of their services, and in decisions related to improving the healthcare system. To achieve this, significant

community engagement with Francophones will be conducted throughout the implementation of the strategy.

Moreover, the winds of change are coming to the healthcare system. This will certainly have an effect on French language services as well as on the actions arising from this strategy. To address this, we have focused the strategy’s target outcomes on Francophones themselves. We believe that this alignment will help us adapt to changes in the system while keeping our eye on the target of improving access to French language services.

III. Outcomes for 2019

Improved access to French language health services	Active offer	More Francophones can receive care in French
	Information on French language health services	More Francophones know about and are able to use available French language health services
	Performance of French language health services	Francophones have more opportunities to express their level of satisfaction with French language services

IV. Strategic Priorities

Active Offer	Information on French Language Health Services	Performance of French Language Health Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Anticipate French language health services needs · Plan the active offer of French language health services · Coordinate access to health services available in French 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Promote health services available in French · Promote the importance of French language health services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Ensure that the active offer of French language health services is sustainable · Ensure satisfaction of Francophones with French Language Health Services

A. Active Offer

Active offer is defined as the regular and permanent offer of French language services to the Francophone population, which:

- Respects the principle of equity
- Provides a quality of service comparable to that offered in English
- Is linguistically and culturally appropriate to the needs and priorities of Francophones
- Is inherent to the quality of service provided to individuals (patients, residents, beneficiaries) and is an important factor that contributes to their safety

For active offer to improve local healthcare system access, we must anticipate French language service needs, plan the offer of French language services and coordinate services available in French. The following section provides a definition for each of these elements, an overview of the progress we have made in recent years, and actions to take in the coming years.

1. Anticipate French Language Health Services Needs

Reliable data is vital to planning, developing, and making decisions about the offer of services within the healthcare system. A well-planned offer of services relies on the ability to identify both current and future needs. This is even truer in the context of French language services, as these services take time to develop, and the resources required are rarer. The ability to anticipate the distribution and scope of French language services in conjunction with the needs of the Francophone community is thus essential to active offer. Furthermore, if LHIN territories are organized into sub-regions, their boundaries will affect the prediction of the needs of the Francophone population in each sub-region.

The types of data required for French language service planning are generally similar to those required by the system overall. The difference lies in the key variables that identify and isolate the *French* element of practice and decision-making within the system. The table below presents these types of data, the information each type provides, whether each type of data currently exists in the healthcare system, and the actions that have been undertaken to date to improve each type of data.

Data Type	Provides Information on...	Existence of Data	Sources
Socio-demographic	Characteristics of the Francophone population	Yes	-Census -Population data
Epidemiological	Health status of the Francophone population	No	Linguistic variable project

Available services	Capacity to offer FLS	+/-	Annual report on French language services
Use of services	Requests for FLS/ consumer behaviour	No	-Linguistic variable project -Annual report on French language services
Needs of the community and satisfaction with services provided	Patient/client experience	+/-	-Community engagement -Satisfaction surveys

a. Progress Made in Recent Years

Although the availability of most of the required data is limited or non-existent, we have made significant strides toward being able to generate and use this data effectively:

- 17 hospitals are now generating data on the linguistic identity of their patients, which enables them to determine the types of services provided to Francophones.
- Methodologies have been developed to analyze the offer of French language services in order to identify service gaps.
- New digital tools for health service providers have been developed and deployed. These tools provide data on the existing offer of French language services.
- Engagement structures and processes have been developed and tested to enable the Francophone community to participate in planning.
- Information collected on the needs of the community supports the planning processes of local initiatives.

b. Socio-Demographic Data

Socio-demographic data provides information on the characteristics of the Francophone population, the distribution of the population throughout a given territory, and some health determinants. This data affects active offer planning, as geographical distribution and Francophone population density affect French language service needs.

c. Epidemiological Data on the Health Status of the Francophone Population

Epidemiological data enables us to understand the prevalence and evolution of illnesses within a population. This data affects the planning and delivery of health services. Currently, this data exists for the general population, but we are not able to analyze it in a Francophone-specific context. This makes it difficult to anticipate the French language services required to meet the health needs of the region's Francophones.

d. Data on Available French Language Health Services

Data on available services provides an indicator of the system's capacity to offer services in French. This data enables us to understand which services are offered in French, where they are offered, to what degree they are offered, etc. Knowledge of the services that are

available is essential to effectively identify the service gaps that must be filled in order to meet the service needs of the Francophone community.

e. Data on the Use of French Language Health Services

Data on the use of services is important for the performance of the system, as well as of French language services and their relationship with services offered. However, there are a number of issues related to this data. First, there is no process in place that effectively collects information about Francophones' use of health services. Second, the literature shows that Francophones hesitate to request and use French language services for fear of negative consequences, such as longer wait times. And last, service providers have indicated that they receive few or no requests for services in French, which leads to the impression of a lack of need for such services.

f. Data on the Needs of the Community and Satisfaction with Services Provided

Data on the needs of the community offer an understanding, from the patient's point of view, of the needs and challenges related to services and their effects on access. Moreover, data on patient satisfaction with the services they receive offers an understanding, based on patient experience, of how the services were able to meet their needs. This information can only be gained from patients, which highlights the importance of community engagement and the integration of the patient experience into service planning.

Actions

- 1) Include an impact analysis on French language health services in the identification of sub-regions for each LHIN.
- 2) Continue integrating the linguistic variable into service providers' information collection processes.
- 3) Analyze and integrate all generated data into French language service decision-making and planning.
- 4) Optimize reporting in order to collect data on all LHIN-funded health service providers' capacity to offer services in French.
- 5) Develop and implement a community engagement plan specific to Francophones to understand their needs, their challenges, and their experiences with the healthcare system over the next three years.
- 6) Develop a reference framework to support the inclusion of the Francophone patient in the collection and integration of the patient experience.

2. Plan the Active Offer of French Language Health Services

Planning the active offer of French language services is essential to achieving the goal of access. Within the local healthcare system, there are a number of stakeholders with responsibilities regarding health service planning and delivery. These include the LHINs, regional programs, coalitions, special committees, and health service providers. There are also various plans, models, strategies, and other documentation to guide the development of services. Planning the active offer of French language services does not replace, but rather complements, existing practice. Once the principles and elements essential to the *French language* dimension are understood, they can be integrated directly into these structures.

To achieve active offer throughout the entire local healthcare system, the following principles must be respected:

1. Planning of new services anticipates the delivery and geographical distribution of the offer of French language services.
2. Gaps in the offer of French language services are identified and a plan to address them is in place.
3. The health issues and priorities set out by the Francophone community are known, and healthcare system actions take them into account.
4. Active offer planning adjusts with changes to the system.

The application of these principles requires the following essential elements:

a. Awareness

Awareness of the importance of French language services enables stakeholders involved in planning to understand the relevance of including active offer planning. The relevance of French language services to the quality, equity, and safety of care are examples of this awareness.

b. Accountability

Stakeholder accountability toward French language service planning means that expectations regarding active offer can be clearly set out and that all stakeholders have responsibilities related to French language services, which vary according to need. The recognition of these responsibilities leads stakeholders to support French language service planning, and concrete actions follow. Local conditions on French language services in accountability agreements are one example of this.

c. Regional Planning of the Delivery of French Language Health Services

Regional planning for the delivery of services includes decision-making and operationalization of the capacity to offer services, the distribution of services throughout a given territory, the identification of providers responsible for service delivery, as well as service and care delivery models. This function operates according to the stakeholders, structures, and means related to the nature of targeted initiatives and services. It is essential, during this exercise, to define the required actions to enable stakeholders to develop a targeted offer of French language services according to a given initiative and to integrate them into regional planning practices. These actions are motivated by the application of the principles of active offer set out above. The principles of active offer apply to all planning initiatives and help to guide actions to adapt to specific conditions created by the environment, the type of services, etc.

d. Delivery of French Language Health Services

The active offer of French language services is made concrete by the delivery of these services. Methods must be established to develop and benchmark delivery. Designation under the *French Language Services Act* is one such method. This process helps to create a framework for the offer of French language services within a provider's culture and

practice, as well as to ensure the permanence and quality of French language services. To date, 47 providers in the Champlain region and 12 in the South East region have already undertaken this process.

We also acknowledge that many providers that have not undertaken the designation process do offer services in French. The challenge of this situation is to be aware of these services and to guarantee the quality and sustainability of the delivery of these French language services. Where designation is not applicable, we will assess the feasibility of other French language service delivery models.

e. Progress Made in Recent Years

A number of actions have been taken in recent years in support of active offer planning. The following list presents a summary of achievements:

- The education of various planning agencies has led to these agencies integrating French language service objectives into their strategic planning and their action plans.
- A positive dynamic regarding designation has led to an increase in the number of providers undertaking this process.
- Designation has become an integral part of regional French language health service planning.

Actions

- 1) Develop a framework for the planning of French health services.
- 2) Continue to support the development of providers' designation plans.
- 3) Develop a plan to address French language service gaps throughout the continuum of care.

3. Coordinate Access to Health Services Available in French

The coordination of French language services is critical to the effective use of existing resources and to access to French language services for Francophone patients. However, we often hear from providers that they do not know where to refer their Francophone patients to receive services in French. In many cases, the services exist in French, but other providers do not know about them. It is difficult for patients to both access and navigate French language services. The issue of coordination is not unique to French language services, and a number of processes have been implemented to try to improve coordination. In the case of French language services, there are two dimensions to consider: information on existing services and centralized coordination mechanisms. Although the latter can improve the coordination of and access to services, failure to consider the Francophone variable and French language services could produce negative outcomes. The desire for all coordinated care to be offered in French adds yet another layer of complexity. Ultimately, coordination becomes an important point when one considers the increase of available French language services and the objective of an integrated healthcare system.

a. Progress Made in Recent Years

Coordination of available services is conditional on the existence of the offer and the awareness of existing French language services. Much energy has been invested in recent years in developing the offer. Ways to improve knowledge of the system and services available in French have also been developed. We have achieved the following:

- 1) Tools to capture information on available services
- 2) Methodology to analyze capacity to identify the offer of French language services
- 3) Planning initiatives that took into account existing services

Actions

- 1) Determine the best ways to share information on services available in French among health service providers.
- 2) Develop a reference guide on best practices for coordination of services in French for intake services and for coordinated care plans.

B. Information on French Language Health Services

Knowledge of services available in French has a significant impact on access. This knowledge must be shared among system stakeholders and Francophones. For the system, this information helps to improve coordination of care. Actions in this area are outlined in the previous section. For Francophones, this information enables them to more easily navigate through the healthcare system and empowers them in matters of their own health.

a. Progress Made in Recent Years

A number of initiatives have enabled us to share information on available services:

- 1) Carrefour santé, with more than a hundred exhibitors
- 2) Various health service fairs (*Franco-foire* and *Foire pour les aînés*)
- 3) Social for healthcare professionals in Kingston

1. Promote Services Available in French

During consultations, Francophones often ask us for information on French language services and how to access them. Although there are information packages available here and there, this information is neither well organized nor intuitively accessible. It is worth considering this issue to determine effective means of making this information available.

Furthermore, services available in French often exist in response to a need raised by the community during an engagement exercise. Sharing this information would complete the feedback loop and demonstrate progress made to Francophones.

Action

- 1) Assess, define, and implement effective communication channels to reach the community with information on services available in French.

2. Promote the Importance of French Language Health Services

We know that, for Francophone individuals, the ability to receive a health service in French has a favourable impact on the safety and quality of the care received, on their health status, and on the effectiveness of the system. Despite these benefits, Francophones remain hesitant to request and use French language services for fear of waiting longer for a service, receiving lower quality care, or being seen as demanding. Over and above simply sharing information on services available in French, we must also educate Francophones about the importance of requesting and using French language health services.

An understanding of the importance of French language services is also key for healthcare system stakeholders. French language services are still seen by some as an add-on, an extra task, an obligation, or an imposition that offers little or no added value to the system. When we consider access, quality of services received, and patient experience, it becomes clear that this is not true. Therefore, promoting the importance of French language services to the patient experience, along with the integration of French language services into the local healthcare system, will help to normalize these services. This normalization in turn helps to reinforce the patient-centred approach.

Action

- 2) Run an awareness campaign on the importance of French language health services.

C. Performance of French Language Health Services

Performance is the alignment of concerted efforts and fixed objectives. In a French language service-specific context, performance considers the following:

- The effectiveness of the system at generating active offer for a given service
- The extent of services in development to address gaps
- The ability of planning and service delivery models of French language services to adapt to a changing environment
- The capacity of the overall local healthcare system to respond to the needs of Francophones regarding the offer of French language services

Performance takes on additional importance when we consider that the development and implementation of French language services involves multiple inter-related components and relies on limited resources. Two inherent characteristics of this performance are sustainability of the active offer of French language services and higher patient satisfaction with services received in French.

a. Progress Made in Recent Years

Measuring the performance of French language services in recent years has been challenging, due mainly to the absence of reliable data specific to French language services. As stated previously, we have made significant progress in this area, and there are now ways to measure performance.

Overall progress made in recent years has largely been influenced by the ongoing collaboration between the LHINs and the Réseau. In addition, the establishment of a performance measurement framework has enabled us to assess our progress toward the outcomes set out in previous joint annual action plans and to support the discussions that led to our current strategy.

1. Ensure that the Active Offer of French Language Health Services is Sustainable

The active offer must continue to exist in the system in order to meet the current and future French language services needs of Francophones in an ever-changing environment. To ensure that it does, we must maintain a focus on the permanence of services, the optimization of existing resources, and the practice of performance measurement.

a. Permanence of Services

Permanence aims to maintain developing services, build on progress made, and minimize the erosion of services over time. This is accomplished through French language services planning and delivery models that incorporate best practices and promote longevity and adaptability. It also requires ongoing care to ensure that changes to the system — either through transformation or integration, or through amendments to funding formulas — do not accidentally eliminate French language services that meet a Francophone need.

b. Optimization of Existing Resources

As stated previously, the active offer of French language services relies on resources that are limited, notably human resources with French language competencies. We know that these human resources are present in the system and that they can contribute to active offer if used to their full potential. We also know that there are costs linked directly to the planning and delivery of French language services, including translation, language training, and linguistic competency assessments. For many providers, these costs limit their ability to develop their active offer. Moreover, the financial resources of the healthcare system itself are also limited. We must therefore ensure that the use of these resources is optimized in order to mitigate negative repercussions on the development of the active offer.

c. Performance Indicators

To monitor the progress of this strategy as well as the advancement of the active offer of French language services, we must adopt a practice of performance measurement. As the expression goes, what gets measured gets done. The establishment of performance indicators specific to French language services and the accountability of providers toward these indicators will contribute to the sustainability of these services.

Actions

- 1) Develop a performance measurement framework for the strategy and keep stakeholders of the system and francophone communities abreast of the progress.

- 2) Define and implement performance indicators for French language services for the local healthcare system in collaboration with the appropriate provincial authorities.
- 3) Continue to include local conditions on French language services in accountability agreements.
- 4) Understand the costs linked to the delivery of French language services and define ways to use financial resources efficiently.

2. Ensure satisfaction of Francophones with French Language Health Services

Patient satisfaction with the services they receive is one of the system's most important performance indicators to meet expressed needs. Therefore, it is important to determine the level of satisfaction with French language services. This information will help to assess the performance of this strategy and the methods put in place to improve active offer.

In the context of satisfaction, service quality is of paramount importance. In short, poor quality services may lead to patient dissatisfaction. Ongoing improvement in the quality of services offered in French can thereby contribute to active offer and to improving Francophone patient satisfaction with services provided.

Actions

- 1) Use existing general patient satisfaction collection methods to capture satisfaction with French language services.
- 2) Integrate an element specific to French language services into quality improvement plans.

V. Expected Changes to the Healthcare System

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has released a document entitled *Patients First*, which sets out a proposal for significant changes to the system. These changes will affect, among others, Community Care Access Centres, primary care and public health facilities, and the LHINs. These changes will certainly have an effect on French language services. As we learn more about the nature and scope of the proposed changes and as they begin to take effect, we will reassess the actions outlined in this strategy and make the decisions required to ensure that we achieve our desired outcomes.

Conclusion

This three-year strategy outlines how we will improve access to French language health services through a focus on the active offer of French language services, information on French language health services, and the performance of French language health services.

The joint actions of the Champlain LHIN, the South East LHIN and the Réseau will enable us to orient the desired changes toward our target outcomes focused on Francophones. These actions will also contribute to:

- The integration of French language services into system planning practices
- A greater awareness of existing services

- The importance of French language services
- Enhanced performance of active offer
- Francophone patient satisfaction

Appendix A: Summary of Joint Action Plan

Joint Action Plan	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
Active Offer			
Anticipate French language health service needs			
Include an impact analysis on French language health services in the identification of sub-regions for each LHIN	80%	20%	
Continue integrating the linguistic variable into service providers' information collection processes	33%	33%	33%
Analyze and integrate all generated data into French language service decision-making and planning	20%	40%	40%
Optimize reporting in order to collect data on all LHIN-funded health service providers' capacity to offer services in French	80%	20%	
Develop and implement a community engagement plan specific to Francophones to understand their needs, their challenges and their experiences with the healthcare system	33%	33%	33%
Develop a reference framework to support the inclusion of the Francophone patient in the collection and integration of the patient experience	20%	60%	20%
Plan the active offer of French language services			
Develop a framework for the planning of French health services	80%	20%	
Continue to support the development of providers' designation plans	33%	33%	33%
Develop a plan to address French language services gaps throughout the continuum of care	10%	40%	50%
Coordinate access to services available in French			
Determine the best ways to share information on services available in French among health service providers	20%	40%	40%
Develop a reference guide on best practices for coordination of services in French for intake services and for coordinated care plans	80%	20%	
Information on Health Services			
Promote services available in French			
Assess, define and implement effective communication channels to reach the community with information on services available in French	10%	30%	60%
Promote the importance of French language health services			
Run an awareness campaign on the importance of French language health services	20%	40%	40%

Performance of French Language Services			
Ensure that the active offer of French language health services is sustainable			
Develop a performance measurement framework for the strategy and keep stakeholders of the system and francophone communities abreast of the progress	80%	10%	10%
Define and implement performance indicators for French language services for the local healthcare system in collaboration with the appropriate provincial authorities	40%	40%	20%
Continue to include local conditions on French language services in accountability agreements	33%	33%	33%
Understand the costs linked to the delivery of French language services and define ways to use financial resources efficiently	25%	25%	50%
Ensure satisfaction of Francophones with French language health services			
Use existing general patient satisfaction collection methods to capture satisfaction with French language services	25%	50%	25%
Integrate an element specific to French language services into quality improvement plans	20%	60%	20%

Note: Percentages are measured on an annual basis and are not cumulative