

Official Languages' Report

December 2013



Overview

Horizon Health Network is committed to providing patients, their family and all members of the public with quality health care in the official language of their choice. At Horizon, we know that the basis for good health care is good communication and we continue to take on new initiatives to improve access to services for both linguistic communities.

As mentioned in our previous report, published in September 2013, local Francophone Liaison sub-committees were established in the areas of Saint John, Miramichi and Fredericton to better identify any gaps in access to services in French.

Accomplishments

All three local sub-committees were tasked with identifying gaps in access to services for their minority population. Initiatives were then developed to help eliminate or reduce these gaps. Although each local sub-committee identified area-specific needs, ideas for initiatives were consolidated to eliminate any redundancies.

Two initiatives, which were common to more than one area, were adopted as Horizon-wide initiatives.

The first Horizon-wide initiative is an awareness-building campaign that is being coordinated in partnership with Horizon's Communications and Community Relations' team. This project includes the production of posters and printed material as well as the purchase of signs and pins indicating that services are offered in both official languages. The project is in its initial stages of development. A slogan has been identified and work has begun.

The second Horizon-wide initiative is a study on current practices surrounding the active offer of health-care services in both official languages. Conducted in collaboration with Université de Moncton and Vitalité, the study focuses on identifying

variables (organizational culture, level of awareness, lack of training, insufficient human, financial or other resources) that hinder or prevent staff from making the active offer in both official languages. The objective of the research is to draw up an action plan, which will include concrete and achievable recommendations to improve the delivery of services to our minority Francophone communities.

Several local initiatives were also identified. For instance, Saint John has begun work on creating an informal area in the cafeteria of the Saint John Regional Hospital where a trained educator will be on-site, at predetermined dates and times, to offer language training in an informal setting. These sessions will focus on needs identified by staff working directly with the public and patients. This project also aims at creating links between the hospital staff and the Francophone community in the greater Saint John area.

Employees in the Saint John and Fredericton areas have and will continue to receive training to address gaps in mental health services for Horizon's Francophone minority. Special attention was given to the needs of our youth. So far, Roots of Empathy training has been offered as well as Mental Health First Aid training.

Official Languages Complaints Process

Since September 2013, Horizon has received one formal official languages complaint for the Saint John Regional Hospital.

The complainant alleged that their mother-in-law was unable to get services in her official language of choice. According to the complainant, their mother-in-law was in distress and attempted to communicate her needs to staff, but staff present at the time could not communicate with her because of the language barrier. They allegedly assumed that the patient was disoriented. The complainant is asking how staff could come to this conclusion if they couldn't speak with her.

The information provided by the Office of the Commissioner of Official

Languages for New Brunswick to Horizon Health Network was insufficient and, for this reason, Horizon was unable to identify the department in question or investigate the events. Horizon is therefore not in a position to acknowledge or deny the alleged events.

However, as Horizon is committed to delivering quality health care services in the patient's language of choice, Horizon proceeded to offer an information session to the Saint John area Directors' Council. The session addressed topics such as the *Official Languages Act*, the active offer, contingency plans, linguistic profiles, recruitment, language proficiency levels, patient safety and employee awareness.

Future Planning

Official Languages has scheduled a planning session for early January 2014. Other Horizon departments, such as Human Resources, Workforce Relations and Organizational Learning will be participating in this session as key stakeholders in Official Languages strategic initiatives. The objective is to identify priorities for Official

Languages for the upcoming fiscal year and to identify the roles of each stakeholder to ensure that initiatives identified are feasible and sustainable.

The creation of an Official Languages Dashboard will also be undertaken to monitor improvements in service delivery to our patients.

For more information contact:

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