

BRIEFING NOTE

Health Unit Participation in Ontario Health Team Development

November 21, 2019

SUMMARY

The Ontario Health Team Initiative of the Ministry of Health currently underway is “being introduced to provide a new way of organizing and delivering care that is more connected to patients in their local communities.” Health care providers are currently working on proposals for four Ontario Health Teams (OHT) in Leeds, Grenville and Lanark. The Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit is participating as an Allied Partner in each one. There is an important role for municipalities to bring their unique perspective to the discussion this fall, as further development takes place with each of the proposed OHTs.

BACKGROUND

“The Ontario government is building a connected health care system centred around patients, families and caregivers. These changes will strengthen local services, making it easier for patients to navigate the system and transition between providers.”

“Ontario Health Teams are being introduced to provide a new way of organizing and delivering care that is more connected to patients in their local communities. Under Ontario Health Teams, health care providers (including hospitals, doctors and home and community care providers) will work as one coordinated team - no matter where they provide care”

<http://health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/connectedcare/oht/default.aspx>

The Rapid-Improvement Support and Exchange (RISE) resources from the McMaster Health Forum provide good resource materials that outline expectations of how the Ontario Health Teams will function.

- Landing page - <https://www.mcmasterforum.org/rise>
- Key resources (including briefs for OHTs) - <https://www.mcmasterforum.org/rise/access-resources/key-resources>
- Webinars - <https://www.mcmasterforum.org/new-at-the-forum/news-item/2019/10/11/rise-webinars-addressed-priority-topics-for-ontario-health-teams>

COMMENT

The Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit has been participating in the development of the four Ontario Health Team proposals for the Lanark, Leeds and Grenville area. We are an Allied Partner committed to working with whichever proposals or joint proposals are funded for development.

The key themes that public health is bringing to the discussions are:

- **Focus on Health Promotion and Prevention:** The current health care system's primary focus is on diagnosis and treatment. Promoting regular physical activity, healthy nutrition, social support, stress management, injury prevention, prevention of smoking and problematic alcohol and substance use as a routine part of primary care would increase health and well-being, quality of life and prevent many health problems.
- **Population Management of Chronic Health Conditions:** Consider all individuals in the catchment area with a health condition like asthma, diabetes, COPD or mental illness whether or not they are currently using health services. Detecting health problems early and involving the individual and family in active management of chronic conditions improves health and quality of life and decreases overall health care costs.
- **Address Socio-Economic Determinants of Health:** Housing, transportation, income, stigma and other social and economic factors influence health, and the onset and ability to manage health problems. The expansion of the current Health Links initiative at Rideau Health services, designed to respond to these challenges for individuals and families, will expand the already effective improvement of health and quality of life with a reduction in health care utilization for frequent users of the health care system with multiple health problems.
- **Ensure Health Equity:** Access to health care services varies among people in the community based on age, gender, education, income, place of residence, access to transportation and many other factors. Considering these factors as health services are planned, organized, delivered and evaluated will increase the number of people who can benefit from the services. Including a variety of people in the community in the planning process will assist in this process.
- **Collaboration with Municipalities:** Municipalities have an important role to play in promoting the health of residents in their community through housing, social services, recreation, promoting healthy environments and healthy communities. Regular liaison with the municipalities will help to guide their decisions about these important components of municipal policies, programs and services.
- **Collaboration with Community Organizations** – Lanark County has many organizations, both publicly and privately funded, that also support the health of the population. Formal relationships with these organizations and municipalities will support a seamless web of services and supports for the residents of our communities.
- **Ensure Interconnectedness among Ontario Health Teams** – The geographic or other boundaries defining the catchment area of the Ontario Health Teams can prove to be a barrier to accessing needed health services if these boundaries become rigid. It is critical that the Ontario Health Teams develop policies and processes to ensure boundaries do not affect access to care.

Several municipalities have been involved in discussions about Ontario Health Teams as the concept was being explored. They brought a valued and unique perspective to the discussions both as a provider of

social services and opportunities to support a healthy community, and also in providing knowledge of their community members. It is important that this engagement continues as further development of the four proposals proceeds this fall.

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