

2024-2025

# Health Sciences North Quality Improvement Plan



Health Sciences North  
Horizon Santé-Nord



Health Sciences North  
Research Institute  
Institut de recherches  
d'Horizon Santé-Nord

# OVERVIEW



*The Acute and Reactivation Care Centre (ARCC) opened a 52-bed unit to help older patients regain their independence.*

Health Sciences North (HSN) is Northeastern Ontario's regional referral and academic health sciences centre. We provide a broad range of programs and specialized services to a diverse patient population over a large geographical area. We take pride in our purpose of providing high quality health services, support learning for healthcare providers and generate research that improves health outcomes for the people of Northeastern Ontario.

Over the past year, HSN has continued to improve the quality and safety of care provided to patients and families.

Our ongoing commitment is evident as a result of the following accomplishments:

- Achieving Accreditation with Exemplary Standing, by Accreditation Canada, as a result of our last on-site survey in June, 2023.
- The Shirley and Jim Fielding Northeast Cancer Centre achieving the status of top performing regional cancer program in Ontario for Quarters 1 through 3.
- Opening the Acute and Reactivation Care Centre (ARCC). A 52-bed unit aiming to reverse or stabilize a declining in health status in older adults, and helping them regain their independence.



*The Shirley and Jim Fielding Northeast Cancer Centre achieved the top performing regional cancer program in Ontario Quarters 1 through 3.*

Throughout the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) planning and consultation process, consideration was given to organizational priorities, previous QIP performance and Ontario Health recommendations. The following four indicators have been selected by HSN for its 2024-25 QIP:



**Access & Flow:** Time to Inpatient Bed



**Safety:** Medication Reconciliation at Discharge



**Experience:** Do patients feel they received enough information about their health and their care at discharge?



**Experience:** Adequate Health Human Resources

# ACCESS AND FLOW

HSN is the region's largest and busiest hospital. With 580 beds, ~73,000 Emergency Department visits per year, ~1700 admissions and discharges per month, in 2023-2024, HSN saw an Emergency Department wait time to inpatient bed high of 48.0 hrs (90<sup>th</sup> percentile monthly) and a low of 34.6 hrs. Despite these pressures, HSN continues to strive to improve the patient experience by seeking ways to better navigate our capacity challenges.

In early 2022, HSN sought partnership within our community to increase the number of beds by 16. This partnership with Amberwood Suites, a local retirement home, has proven to be successful and in 2024, HSN will pursue adding an additional 31 beds to alleviate bed pressures.



HSN has implemented a program called Home to Rehab to assist with access and flow. In this program, HSN collaborated with Bayshore Healthcare to offer intensive rehabilitation services in the community 5 days a week for 6 weeks to appropriate patients. This program lowers the number of patients waiting in acute care beds by keeping them in the community, allowing for increased flow at HSN.

Other collaborations aimed to improve access and flow included work with a local Convalescence Care Program and Home and Community Supports to streamline application and acceptance processes as well as enhance communications.

Looking forward, HSN will adopt a new process for designating patients as Alternative Level of Care (ALC) and explore a medicine outpatient clinic to help avoid admissions and provide better care in an alternative setting.

# EQUITY AND INDIGENOUS HEALTH



*Suchita Bali, Manager of Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Accessibility and Anti-Racism (IDEAA)*

HSN is committed to addressing priority health concerns and health equity gaps for Northerners under the strategic key goal to **Be Socially Accountable**.

In June 2023, HSN appointed a new Manager of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Anti-Racism, who made it a top priority to establish the HSN and HSNRI's Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Anti-Racism (IDEAA) Committee. The IDEAA committee will oversee the IDEAA action plan, health equity data governance, collection and reporting, talent management, policy and practice review, and training and education.

In May 2023, HSN Indigenous Health established the Indigenous Health Advisory Council (IHAC) in partnership with Indigenous People. The purpose of the committee is to explore, develop, and implement collective health priorities in a mutually established action plan framed by the *Calls of Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission*. The IHAC is leading the identification of health priorities and planning to reduce inequities and improve health outcomes for Indigenous Peoples. This includes the implementation of culturally safe Voluntary Self Identification and Patient Navigation referrals for Indigenous Peoples. This was put in place in December 2023 to support holistic culturally safe circle of care and care pathways for Indigenous patients and families. IHAC is also exploring cultural safety training to develop recommendations for implementation at HSN in 2024.



*Deanna Jones-Keeshig and the HSN Indigenous Health Team.*

This year, Indigenous Health under the direction of the IHAC will initiate efforts to involve Indigenous patients, families and communities in the development of an Indigenous Cancer Care Strategy, and Regional Cancer Care Strategy, that integrates the health priorities of Indigenous Peoples in the provision of Cancer Care in the Northeast.

HSN is also focused on three key French Language Services (FLS) objectives: achieving full compliance during the upcoming FLS evaluation, launching a new all-staff active offer training, and implementing internal mechanisms to better assess our services.



# PATIENT /CLIENT/RESIDENT EXPERIENCE

Patient and Family Advisors (PFAs) work in partnership with HSN and HSNRI to provide the highest standard of safe and quality care by integrating the patient and family/caregiver point of view into service and quality improvement.



*Members of HSN Patient and Family Advisory Council*

Their perspective has helped to inform decisions and set priorities for the organization. This is evident as a result of their contributions to the development of the 2019-2024 Strategic Plan for HSN and HSNRI, and the subsequent engagement in activities that has led to achieving our strategic key goals:

- **Be Patient and Family Focused:** HSN celebrated the grand opening of the ARCC on November 8, 2023. Designed in partnership with PFAs and with older adult patients in mind, ARCC provides recreational and rehabilitative care activities, and a full team of nurses and allied health with specialized training. As part of providing an improved patient care experience, this unit was designed with direct input from Ann, a retired nurse who served as a PFA on the creation of the ARCC.
- **Be Digitally Enabled:** the Emergency Department has proudly collaborated with PFAs to co-design a process using patient-friendly language that supports the collection of personal health information entered into a patient's electronic medical record.
- **Be Socially Accountable:** The IHAC is comprised of a PFA and 13 other members who reflect on the diverse and unique Indigenous population of the Northeast region. Members of the committee work to ensure a collaborative, respectful and sustainable approach is taken to service delivery for Indigenous people and that the needs of Indigenous people are considered in decision-making related to the conduct of research and in the assessment, care and treatment of Indigenous peoples at HSN.
- **Support and Develop Our People:** the HSN Wellness Steering Committee continues to benefit from the active participation of PFAs. Their feedback contributed to HSN's wellness strategy related to employee's health, safety and well-being.
- **Strengthen our Academic and Research Impact:** HSNRI has partnered with PFAs to initiate a patient-oriented research plan to prioritize patient engagement and collaboration throughout all stages of the research process. PFAs are valued committee members on both the HSNRI Program Council and Research Ethics Board, where they actively contribute to the operationalization of program goals and provide the patient voice with ethical discussions that arise when reviewing upcoming and current research projects. Incorporating patient perspectives and expertise into our research generates meaningful and impactful results that will improve the health and well-being of our communities.



*Ann, Patient and Family Advisor*

# PROVIDER EXPERIENCE

In alignment with our strategic key goal to **Support and Develop Our People**, the HSN Wellness Steering Committee continues to focus on creating a healthier, positive and productive work environment. The committee implements and promotes wellness initiatives, standards and activities to foster a workplace culture that prioritizes and supports the well-being of its health care workers. This leads to increased morale, productivity and overall job satisfaction. HSN will monitor the success of these initiatives through the retention focused indicator of containing staff turnover to 13%. Key strategies that will drive the achievement of this target include:



- Optimizing healthcare worker engagement opportunities including Quality of Worklife survey results and ongoing pulse surveys focused on improving staff satisfaction;
- Improving the time to fill positions by reducing the number of days between receipt of application and first offer;
- Enhancing organizational recognition and wellness programming;
- Continuing to invest in skills and leadership development training.

Embedded within the Health Human Resources QIP, is our continued commitment to providing a physically, psychologically and culturally safe environment that promotes a positive care, working, and learning experience. HSN will continue to actively address workplace safety incidents through awareness, prevention and response measures. This year, the organization will focus on reducing the number of health care worker safety critical events, including workplace violence, sharps, blood and body fluid exposure, slips/trips/falls, and musculoskeletal disorders.



Key strategies that will support this include:

- Improving the visibility, distribution and use of safety data to identify areas of risk and trends to inform action;
- Completion of workplace safety critical event investigations and associated action plans within 30 days.

# SAFETY

HSN has a comprehensive safety event management process to support reporting, investigating and learning of patient safety events. It is a system where staff and patients feel safe to report errors or concerns. This past year, our process began to include PFAs in event analyses for most patient safety events. Adding the patient perspective has encouraged transparency and accountability.



To improve communication and shared learning across the organization, our process ensures that our leaders share event outcomes to key stakeholders, at unit huddles and program councils, to increase knowledge translation and awareness of system wide improvements.

The Quality and Patient Safety (QPS) team continues to promote transparency as it relates to patient safety. They introduced a corporate newsletter as another mechanism to share learnings from patient safety events. The first edition was published during the Canadian Patient Safety week and presented two patient safety events. The publication also highlighted the process for reporting events, and the importance of reporting to mitigate future safety events from occurring.

We continue to monitor the overall health of the safety event management system with various process and metrics. As a result, we have seen an improvement in critical events closed within 30 days (2021-22 77%, 2022-23 65%, 2023-24 64%). In April 2024, HSN will implement a new regional electronic medical record (EMR) that will include a safety event reporting module. This system will offer additional mechanisms to monitor data and identify patient safety events trends at HSN and across the region. This will allow us to proactively address safety issue and concerns.



# POPULATION HEALTH APPROACH

HSN continues to improve our holistic approach to healthcare by working with community partners to ensure promotion of overall health and prevention of disease for our patients. Strategies such as preventative care, health education and community outreach programs are some of the areas our clinical programs are working with community partners to provide services addressing the broader social determinants of health impacting our community.

HSN has implemented a Harm Reduction Committee which includes a broad membership of frontline staff, administrative and medical leadership as well as community partners dealing with our mental health population. Outcome #11 of the Strategic plan sets as a key goal *“Improve access to mental health and addictions care at HSN and in the community. Timely consultation and treatment support will be made available regardless of where patients are located at HSN, with clear pathways for follow-up in the community upon discharge. Mental health and addictions practitioners will develop the capacity of care providers in the use of evidence-based guidelines to treat mental illness and reduce harms of alcohol and substance use”*.

Some of the initiatives driven by this committee have included:

- Education and distribution of harm reduction kits to clinical units who may serve this population;
- Education on the administration and distribution of Naloxone kits throughout areas of the hospital, including our security team, who may need to administer Naloxone;
- The addition of and addictions outreach worker collaborating with internal and external stakeholders to support,



*Dr. Luke Hartford and Dr. Ahmed Al Mazrou'i  
Member of the Surgical and Gastroenterology Care Team that  
treat pancreatic cancer and other gastrointestinal disorders*

navigate and connect individuals experiencing mental health and substance use to services at HSN or in the community.

The Shirley and Jim Fielding Northeast Cancer Centre provides Radiation Treatment, Chemotherapy and Supportive Care Services to the residents of Northeastern Ontario. In partnership with HSN's Indigenous Health Services, created a series of informative videos and postcards to raise cancer screening awareness. These were developed to promote cancer screening with our Indigenous and 2SLGBTQ+ partners to help encourage a preventive approach to cancer. The team partnered with people with lived experience to advise on language and concerns of issues relevant to sexual orientation and gender identity. The video series “It's Time” can be found on Health Sciences North website.

<https://hsnsudbury.ca/en/Services-and-Specialties/Cancer-Care/Cancer-Screening/Conversations-About-Inclusive-Cancer-Screening>

These videos were inspired by the success of the Indigenous focused cancer screening videos which were released in 4 languages. These were created in response to Indigenous community members initiating requests that information be made available in an approachable format by a trusted health care professional. These can be found on Health Sciences North website.

<https://hsnsudbury.ca/en/Services-and-Specialties/Cancer-Care/Cancer-Screening/Conversations-about-Cancer-for-Indigenous-People>

Alongside the "It's Time!" video series, the same team designed a series of cancer screening reminder postcards, inclusive of the 4 screening programs. The cards represent a diversity of backgrounds with unique designs for mainstream, same-sex, transgender, and Indigenous communities. These postcards have been distributed to over 200 primary and community healthcare organizations to help facilitate open

and informed conversations about cancer screening. Additionally, cancer screening completed a post card mail out to residents in areas in the Northeast that have been most impacted by primary care provider shortages, inviting them to participate in cancer screening.



*Dr. Erin Peltier  
Family Physician and Regional  
Indigenous Cancer Lead  
Northeast Regional Cancer Program*

# COMPENSATION

Annual performance goals will include the following four quality improvement targets for the period of April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025:

Health Ontario Priority Issue	Quality Dimension	Indicator and Target
Access and Flow	Timely	<b>Time to inpatient bed:</b> Contain the time to inpatient bed in the emergency department below 35.5hrs at the 90th percentile, each month, by March 31, 2025.
Experience	Patient-Centered	<b>Did patients feel they received adequate information about their health and their care at discharge:</b> Achieve 63% of patients providing a positive response to the information they received at discharge by March 31, 2025.
Safety	Effective	<b>Medication Reconciliation at Discharge:</b> Create a best possible medication discharge plan for 80% of patients by March 31, 2025.
Experience	Patient-Centered	<b>Staff Turnover Rate:</b> Contain staff turnover rate to 13% by March 31, 2025.



Stéphan Plante  
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