



**Alliance for Healthier Communities**  
*Advancing Health Equity in Ontario*

# Principles for French Language Health Services for the expansion of Interprofessional Primary Care Teams (IPCTs)

The [Connecting Care Act, 2019](#) calls on the health care system to “recognize the diversity within all of Ontario’s communities and **respect the requirements of the [French Language Services Act \(FLSA\)](#)** in the planning, design, delivery and evaluation of health care services for Ontario’s French-speaking communities.” including the expansion of Interprofessional Primary Care Teams (IPCTs).

In order to support the expansion of IPCTs, the Alliance for Healthier Communities and its Francophone Advisory Committee<sup>1</sup> developed eight principles for supporting the health of the Francophone people and communities they serve. These principles are listed below and elaborated in this document, with links to relevant resources where appropriate.

By operationalizing these principles, IPCTs can ensure that French language health services (FLHS) are planned, designed, delivered, and evaluated appropriately, considering the diversity and various intersectional identities within, and among, Francophone communities in Ontario.

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1. <a href="#">Leverage existing resources</a> .....	3
2. <a href="#">Ensure meaningful, ongoing Francophone engagement</a> .....	3
3. <a href="#">Prioritize services and programs by, and for, Francophones</a> .....	4
4. <a href="#">Identify your Francophone clients/patients (demand for service?)</a> .....	4
5. <a href="#">Identify a pathway for a Francophone continuum of care</a> .....	5
6. <a href="#">Identify and support the capacity of organizations and individuals who can provide FLS</a> .....	5
7. <a href="#">Ensure digital health solutions meet the needs of Francophone clients/patients and providers</a> .....	5
8. <a href="#">Support advocacy for Francophone health equity</a> .....	5

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<sup>1</sup> The Alliance’s Francophone Advisory Committee is comprised of Francophone and bilingual interprofessional primary health organizations as well as partners from French Language Health Service Planning Entities and the Assemblée de la Francophonie de l’Ontario (AFO).

## A note about the French Language Health Planning Entities and the new French Language Health Planning Centre

From 2010 to 2025, the delivery of French Language Health Services was supported across Ontario by six regional networks, known as French Language Health Planning Entities (FLHPEs or “Entities”). Each FLHPE was made up of French-language health service providers working in partnership with local Francophone agencies and community members. Key elements of their mandate were to enable regional system coordination, knowledge exchange, and capacity-building; to support the designation of Francophone and bilingual organizations; to advise Ontario Health about the health needs and priorities of Francophone communities; and to inform strategies for improving access to French language health services in their areas.

In June 2025, as part of the modernization of the FLSA, it was announced that the six entities would be replaced by a single French Language Health Services Planning Centre (FLHPC or “Centre”) that would fulfill the same role at a provincial level. The new FLHPC would be co-created at the request of the Ontario Ministry of Health by the *Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario* and *Hôpital Montfort*, with eventual designation under the French Language Services Act. In September 2025, the new FLHPC was opened.

- [See the distribution of Entities across the province here](#)
- [Find the new French Language Health Planning Centre’s website here](#)

As of December 2025, the situation remains in flux. Many of the resources from the FLHPEs are still available on their websites and are not yet available from the FLHPC, but the FLHPEs’ websites are no longer being updated. As a result, some links in this document may not remain active, and some resources may be out of date. New resources may have become available on the Centre’s website that were not there when this document was updated.

- [Entity 1](#)
- [Entity 2](#)
- [Entity 3](#)
- [Entity 4](#)
- [Entity 5 \(formerly Réseau des services de santé en français de l’Est de l’Ontario\)](#)
- [Entity 6 \(formerly Réseau du mieux-être francophone du nord de l’Ontario\)](#)



## 1. Leverage existing resources

Leverage existing provincial and local resources and supports for IPCTs relating to French Language Services. These resources were developed by health-system partners, and many of them can be found on RISE's webpage, [French Language Services supports for Ontario Health Teams](#). Although these resources were developed to support Ontario Health Teams, they can be helpful in any situation where organizations are collaborating to improve health system integration, access, capacity, and population health for Francophones.

Some of the resources found elsewhere include:

- [Building better patient care and experience for Francophones](#) – a provincial guide highlighting the importance of identifying Francophone clients/patients, including standardized and adapted data-collection tools based on linguistic identity
- [Stratégies gagnantes pour servir les Francophones](#) – six winning strategies for providing services to Francophones
- [Free online training on the active offer of French-language healthcare services](#)
- [CNFS Canada Training Videos](#)
- [Bien communiquer en français](#) – language resources from Entity 5
- [Les Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes : Une minorité linguistique](#) – concept of linguistic minority from Entity 3
- [Documentation sur l'enjeu des données linguistique](#) – documents library from Entity 5
- [Community of practice for French-language service providers](#) in the South West region from Entity 1

Even if your organization is not (or not yet) pursuing status as a designated or identified Francophone or bilingual service provider, you may also find [this list of FLS designation requirements and recommendations](#) helpful in your IPCT expansion planning. It lists mandatory elements and best practices in the domains of governance and organizational policy, direct service to clients/patients, visual identification and communications, accountability, human resources policy and planning, and community support.

## 2. Ensure meaningful, ongoing Francophone engagement

Ensure Francophone engagement is ongoing and not a check-box exercise.

- Engage meaningfully with Francophone clients/patients, families, caregivers, partner organizations, and communities who represent the diverse Francophone population(s) you serve.
- When engaging, empower them to contribute as partners to decisions about the planning, design, delivery, and evaluation of programs and services – including but not limited to French-language services.
- Ensure that local Francophone organizations and community members are at the IPCT decision-making tables.
- Consider and make space for intersectionality. Francophone people and communities are diverse, and their identities may overlap with other priority and equity-deserving groups. Ensure that your engagement process is inclusive and addresses multiple barriers.



### 3. Prioritize services and programs by, and for, Francophones

Organizations governed and led by Francophones are important for linguistic and cultural safety in the delivery of care for Francophones.

- Ensure that the Francophone representation in IPCTs is meaningful and appropriate.
- Work to ensure that non-Francophone organizations who offer services in French meet minimum standards and that they receive any guidance they need to deliver care that respects French culture and language.
- Ensure health equity and intersectional lenses are applied throughout the planning and implementation of initiatives, including deliberate attention to Francophone health.

At the links below, you will find a list of French-language health resources in each region as currently listed on the FLHPEs' websites. Please note that the information may not be current.

- [Entity 1 | Ressources](#)
- [Entity 2 | French-language Health Service Providers](#)
- [Entity 3 | Ressources utiles en santé](#)
- [Entity 4 | Institutions désignées ou identifiées](#)
- [Entity 5 | Trouvez des services](#)
- [Entity 6 | Les services de santé en français](#)

### 4. Identify your Francophone clients/patients and the demand for French-language services

Ensure all partner organizations in your IPCT are collecting linguistic identifiers for Francophones using the [inclusive definition of Francophone](#). Note that *Preferred Language of Service* is not the same as *Mother Tongue*. Both are mandatory for Alliance-member organizations to collect as part of our sector's common Evaluation Framework (recently updated in 2025) and the updated [Health Equity Questionnaire](#) launched in 2024. Clients/patients who self-identify as a Francophone or French-speaking person on registration documents, for example, allow your IPCT providers to know they wish to be served in French. The active demand for FLHS motivates health agencies to recognize the need for French-language services is real and needs to be supported.

- The relevant questions for linguistic identification are presented below:
  - *What is your mother tongue?*  
✎ [a. English; b. French; c. Other (Specify)]
  - *If your mother tongue is neither English nor French, in which of Canada's official languages are you more comfortable?*  
✎ [a. English; b. French]
  - *Do you require language interpretation?*  
✎ [a. Yes; b. No]
  - *What language do you feel most comfortable speaking in with your provider?*  
✎ [Choose all that apply from a list of 50+ languages]
  - *In what language would you prefer to read healthcare information?*  
✎ [Choose all that apply from a list of 35+ languages]



This should take place in the context of broader sociodemographic and race-based data collection across the partner organizations that make up the expanded interprofessional primary care team or neighbourhood health home. [More information and supports for sociodemographic data collection and the Health Equity Questionnaire can be found here.](#)

## 5. Identify a pathway for a Francophone continuum of care

Ensure that your expanded IPCT identifies a [pathway and continuum of care](#) for Francophone clients/patients that includes system navigation and care coordination. Respect and support client/patient choice according to the availability and/or proximity of services in French. Links to regional lists of lists of French-language services and providers can be found in [Section 3](#).

## 6. Identify and support the capacity of organizations and individuals who can provide FLS

Ensure all IPCT partner organizations are identifying designated Francophone positions as well as staff members who can provide services in French. Ensure your [expanded IPCT Human Resource Strategy](#) includes a French-language human resources recruitment strategy.

## 7. Ensure digital health solutions meet the needs of Francophone clients/patients and providers

Are the [tools, software and digital resources](#) used by your IPCT available in both official languages? At a minimum, client/patient portals must be available in both official languages.

## 8. Support advocacy for Francophone health equity

Advocating for the following will help advance health equity for Francophones beyond your IPCT:

- **Addition of a linguistic identifier to the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) card.**

Francophones have been fighting for OHIP cards to include an identifier based on the inclusive definition of *Francophone* ([see Section 4](#)). Including this identifier will facilitate active offer of FLS as well as the planning and distribution of Francophone and bilingual (health) human resources.

- **Ensuring the protection of current and future designations under the *FLSA*.**

Operating as a bilingual organization is not just about having two languages available equally at all times; it is about being able to obtain care in French that is of equivalent quality to services in English. Receiving health services in one's preferred language, even if one understands English very well, ensures better health outcomes and reduces the risk of adverse consequences. For these reasons, it is necessary to maintain the existing capacity and designation of organizations, services, programs and designated Francophone roles even in the context of changing health human resource pressures and strategies.

