

Let's Make Healthy  
Change Happen.



# Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) Narrative for Health Care Organizations in Ontario



**Great Northern**  
Family Health Team

**2025-2026**

**3/5/2025**

This document is intended to provide health care organizations in Ontario with guidance as to how they can develop a Quality Improvement Plan. While much effort and care has gone into preparing this document, this document should not be relied on as legal advice and organizations should consult with their legal, governance and other relevant advisors as appropriate in preparing their quality improvement plans. Furthermore, organizations are free to design their own public quality improvement plans using alternative formats and contents, provided that they submit a version of their quality improvement plan to Health Quality Ontario (if required) in the format described herein.

## Overview

The Great Northern Family Health Team is pleased to share its 2025-2026 Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), which outlines quality improvement efforts for the upcoming fiscal year.

A QIP is a framework of quality commitments designed to address specific quality challenges that a healthcare organization has made to its community. It aligns the organization's objectives with broader regional and provincial healthcare priorities.

With a vision to enhance primary health care, improve patient access and integrate a collaborative care model to improve the health of the Great Northern Family Health Team's rostered patient population, we are committed, as its mission, to provide accessible, patient-centred primary health care through an interdisciplinary team committed to enhancing health care delivery to the Great Northern Family Health Team's rostered patient population.

Rooted in our core values of Excellence, Collaboration, Respect, Accountability, Innovation, and Improvement, we embark on a quality improvement journey that reflects these principles at every step.

The Great Northern Family Health Team's 2025-2026 quality improvement priorities continue to be reflective of the continued work underway across the organization and focus on priorities of education, engagement, integration and coordination of services, effective care and patient flow/access. Priorities include:

- Improving colorectal screening for eligible patients
- Improving breast screening for eligible patients
- Improving ovarian screening for eligible patients
- Increasing shingles immunization rates
- Adopting Digital Solutions – AI Scribe for Providers
- Improving access to care for patients who have visited the Emergency Department for conditions that can be best managed in primary care
- Ensuring employees are provided with equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism education, adopting culturally safe and appropriate practices.
- Ensuring patients feel comfortable and welcome at their primary care office

## Access and Flow

Optimizing system capacity, timely access to care, and patient flow ultimately improve outcomes and the experience of care for patients, clients, and residents. The Great Northern Family Health Team works in partnership and across care sectors on initiatives to avoid unnecessary hospitalizations and avoid visits to emergency departments through new models of care and by ensuring timely access to primary care.

Prioritizing access to care is essential as we look ahead to 2025-2026. In the previous year, we achieved notable advancements in scheduling and workflow that have significantly improved how patients connect with their primary care providers, reducing wait times by around 30%. The GNFHT has also enhanced access by offering more same-day and next-day appointment slots with both our doctors and nursing team.

The Great Northern Family Health Team continues to regularly review program and service demand to align resources, as available. For example, through one-time Mental Health funding support and

internal resource allocation, the Great Northern Family Health Team's mental health service wait time has decreased by approximately 50%.

The GNFHT has also introduced the following services over the past year:

1. Cognitive Behaviour Therapy for Insomnia
2. Diabetic Foot Care Screening and Care
3. TB Skin Testing
4. Wound Care (Support for Ontario Health at Home)
5. Registered Nurse Prescribing

## **Equity and Indigenous Health**

The Great Northern Family Health Team is dedicated to promoting diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging in the workplace. We celebrate and welcome the diversity of all employees, stakeholders, and external personnel.

The Great Northern Family Health Team has adopted a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) in the Workplace policy as part of its commitment to foster an environment where everyone feels as though they belong and that their dignity, beliefs, and identity are respected. To achieve this, the Great Northern Family Health Team will strive to provide a supportive work environment and a culture that welcomes everyone and encourages equitable opportunities for all employees.

Our team has embarked on foundational work of equity and inclusion with Foundations of Indigenous Cultural Safety and Workplace Inclusion for Gender and Sexual Diversity. In 2023, 100% of active employees have successfully completed the noted education. Focus on training for employees remains an ongoing priority for 2025-2026.

Services are currently provided in English and French, with additional languages available through dedicated translation services.

The Great Northern Family Health Team serves as a key partner within the Timiskaming Ontario Health Team (TOHT), with its Executive Director holding the position of co-chair. Through the TOHT, the Great Northern Family Health Team is committed to collaborating with essential partners and stakeholders, including patients, families, and individuals with lived experiences, to identify existing inequities in our region. The TOHT aims to enhance access to culturally and linguistically safe, high-quality care for specific population groups, such as Indigenous peoples, Francophones, newcomers, low-income individuals, racialized communities, and other marginalized or vulnerable populations.

Through collaborative initiatives within the TOHT and funding allocated for 2025-2026, the following objectives have been established:

- Engage First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities, along with local organizations and providers, through diverse methods to promote cultural awareness and safety while addressing anti-Indigenous racism.
- Develop, adopt, and implement local training programs focused on cultural competency, awareness, safety, and trauma-informed care, complemented by a co-designed communications campaign.
- Enhance support for healthcare providers and organizations to practice cultural safety, engage in self-reflection, and recognize the influence of power dynamics on Indigenous clients.

- Advance cultural safety within the healthcare system to facilitate optimal care and enhance patient experiences.
- Establish a sustainability plan that encourages continuous improvement by identifying performance monitoring metrics and implementing accountability measures for culturally safe practices.

### **Patient/Client/Resident Experience**

The Great Northern Family Health Team engages with patients and families focusing on quality activities and experiences through a number of mechanisms including patient experience surveys, patient relations processes, focus groups, and review of services/programs through consultation and invitation. To ensure that patient experience feedback contributes to programs and service design, therefore increasing the volume of experience surveys completed continues to be a priority for the upcoming year.

Based on patient experience feedback, the Great Northern Family Health Team has made a number of improvements including a new phone system and telephone hours, the introduction of online booking options (In-Progress), a new website, a Mental Health program refresh improved access to timely services and resource improvements to improve access to episodic and preventative care. Improved methods of communication with patients through OCEAN's patient messaging feature is also now utilized to enhance office efficiency and improve communication.

The Great Northern Family Health Team's Quality Improvement Plan is publicly posted to facilitate transparency of development and encourage feedback from our community on priority issues, ideas for improvement, and mitigation strategies.

### **Provider Experience**

The Great Northern Family Health Team continues to demonstrate resilience and adaptability, providing continued services to our community through the COVID-19 pandemic, ongoing funding constraints, and health human resource shortages. As an organization, we are committed to assisting all staff and physicians with navigating challenging and difficult times and also supporting them through these challenges.

Within our small team, we have encouraged staff wellness and connectedness through team building, staff appreciation tokens and events, flexibility in work schedules, remote work arrangements, focus on staff health and wellness (i.e., sit/stand desks, prioritizing adequate breaks) and offering education such as exploring psychological health and safety. Our team has also secured an Employee Assistance Program, effective February 1, 2024.

We have supported staff access to tools, technology, and training to enable various care modalities and the various work locations. Team meetings and check-ins are held regularly to ensure information is shared appropriately and provide opportunities for communication and improvement ideas.

### **Safety**

#### **Workplace Violence Prevention**

The Great Northern Family Health Team is committed to building a safe and healthy working environment free of violence, discrimination, harassment, and any other misconduct for its staff, volunteers, and students. A workplace violence prevention policy has been implemented and incidents of workplace violence are reviewed with the organization's Joint Health and Safety Committee, where improvement opportunities are discussed and action plans to mitigate risks are developed.

Improvement ideas such as de-escalation training for all staff and an organizational risk assessment focusing on safety issues and workplace violence vulnerabilities will continue to be implemented over the next year. Through our Joint Health and Safety Committee, an organization-wide health and safety inspection was completed, identifying safety improvements for both patients/visitors and employees.

### **Patient safety**

To help support quality improvement and enhance a safe and just culture, patient safety incidents, near misses and trends are reported and reviewed at our Quality Committee, as applicable. Learnings from patient safety incidents through patient feedback, patient relations processes, and experience surveys help to identify patient safety improvement opportunities.

### **Palliative Care**

The GNFHT is a key collaborator in the Timiskaming Palliative Care Network, which became part of the TOHT structure in 2025. To enhance the coordination and accessibility of palliative care throughout the Timiskaming Ontario Health Team (TOHT), we have established the Palliative Care Advisory Network - Council (PCAN). This advisory group includes members from the TOHT, local service providers, care professionals, and patient/family partners from the Timiskaming District, including Temagami. Our focus is on improving the delivery and coordination of palliative care for our patients. This year, we will focus on organizational readiness, effective communication, education, and engaging care partners to define our shared priorities. The network will aim to:

1. Connect hospice and palliative Care within the TOHT.
2. Serve as a vehicle for providing the local palliative care sector's voice in TOHT decision-making.
3. Support TOHT clinical change management, equity promoting integrated care and population health management approaches.
4. Collaborate to strengthen and develop comprehensive, integrated and coordinated systems of palliative care drawing on the local (TOHT), provincial and regional directions to meet Hospice and Palliative Care Standards for the delivery of care within the TOHT.
5. Identify hospice and palliative care service gaps, priorities and opportunities to improve the delivery of services.
6. Using engagement and co-design approaches, develop, implement and evaluate an annual district work plan for the delivery of quality hospice and palliative care within and amongst health care sectors, with focus on reducing inequities, ensuring accessibility and navigation of services.
7. Review integrated Models of Care and best practices for the delivery of hospice and palliative care including Hospital, Long-Term Care Homes, Hospice and Community, with focus on reducing and avoiding Emergency Department visits, and avoidable hospital admissions.
8. Build capacity and competence with health care providers through promotion and awareness of educational opportunities and available services and pathways.
9. Assist to create awareness with area hospice and palliative care services and programs
10. Recommend and create educational opportunities and supports for individuals and families who are faced with a life limiting illness.
11. Support local Health Human Resource planning within the TOHT.
12. Seek out and support applications for funding opportunities, as well as facilitate data collection relevant to the hospice and palliative care objectives.

## Population Health Management

Population health strategies involve expanding the focus to proactively address the needs of the entire community. This includes offering services that promote health, prevent illness, and assist individuals in managing their conditions effectively during every encounter with the healthcare system. The Great Northern Family Health Team actively collaborates with other health system providers as a fundamental partner in the Timiskaming Ontario Health Team / Équipe Santé Ontario des régions du Timiskaming (TOHT), concentrating on population health initiatives that cater to the distinct needs of our community. To support this effort, a Population Health and Health Equity Advisory Council will be formed within the OHT structure, aimed at conducting a detailed analysis of our assigned population to enhance understanding of their needs and healthcare usage for ongoing planning and evaluation.

## Administrative Burden

Supporting primary care providers and the interprofessional team in being able to spend more time on direct patient care by streamlining clinical and administrative work, where possible. Initiatives that the Great Northern Family Health Team has implemented include:

- Enabling timely patient access to specialists (Utilization of e-Referral)
- Support the streamlining of medical form completion (e.g., standardized notes, letters, and referrals)
- Advance use and the effectiveness of digital systems (e.g., electronic medical record workflows, secure messaging, online appointment booking, and AI Tools (provider documentation))

The Great Northern Family Health Team will be launching AI Scribe (Tali) with the goal of improving the efficiency and accuracy of clinical documentation and reducing administrative burden. This initiative will focus on maintaining patient confidentiality, delivering high-quality care, and ensuring compliance with regulations. Additionally, the Great Northern Family Health Team will be expanding Online Appointment Booking options to better serve our patients.

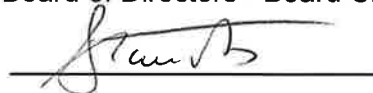
## Contact Information

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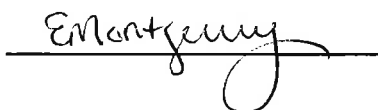
## Sign-off

I have reviewed and approved our organization's 2025-2026 Quality Improvement Plan:

Board of Directors - Board Chair - Stacy Desilets

 (signature)

Executive Director - Erin Montgomery

 (signature)