

The Patients First Act

December 7, 2016

The Patients First Act is part of the government's ongoing work under the Patients First: Action Plan for Health Care to create a more patient-centered health care system in Ontario.

Ontario's 14 Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) are currently responsible for planning and funding of hospitals, long-term care homes, community services and mental health and addiction services. Under the Patients First Act, the LHINs will be responsible for home care (currently the function of Ontario's 14 Community Care Access Centres) and primary care planning to ensure that people in Ontario are getting better and more local care, with less administration.

The legislation will also:

- Give LHINs an expanded mandate to include primary care planning, which will support more same-day, next-day, after-hours and weekend care being available. This will improve access to family doctors and nurse practitioners and support the province's commitment that all Ontarians who want a primary care provider will have one.
- Establish smaller geographic planning regions within each LHIN to help LHINs to better understand and address patient needs at the local level. By looking at care patterns through a smaller lens, LHIN staff will be able to better identify and respond to community needs and work with local health system leaders, including family doctors, nurse practitioners, home care coordinators and home and community care service providers, to build more seamless local health care service delivery. The LHIN will be able to ensure that patients across the entire LHIN will be able to access the care they need, when and where they need it.
- Reduce by 50% the health agencies operating within the LHIN regions with the elimination of the CCACs and their boards, as LHINs and CCACs are currently agencies operating in the same regions.
- Add the promotion of health equity and development and implementation of health promotion strategies to the LHINs' mandate.
- Ensure patients have a voice in local planning by establishing a patient and family advisory committee in each LHIN.
- Enhance accountability by giving LHINs powers to investigate or supervise health service providers and negotiate service accountability agreements with the providers.
- Ensure patient medical information continues to be confidential and secure, including in the case of an investigation, in which case investigators would have to obtain patient consent to access personal health information and patient information would be de-identified.
- Ensure high-quality patient care is provided consistently across the province by having Health Quality Ontario, Ontario's health quality advisor, work with experts to recommend clinical care standards.
- Emphasize the LHINs' responsibility to comply with the French Language Services Act in the planning, design, delivery and evaluation of services.

The province consulted with over 6,000 patients, health care providers, caregivers, stakeholder groups, Indigenous peoples, Francophone groups and other partners in the health care system, including the Ontario Medical Association, on the legislation.

Ontario will continue working with French language health leaders, First Nations, Métis, Inuit and urban Indigenous partners, health providers, patients, families and caregivers to ensure their voices are heard, in particular with respect to equitable access to services that meet their unique needs. Ontario will honour its commitment to meaningfully engage Indigenous partners through a parallel process that will collaboratively identify the requirements necessary to achieve responsive and transformative change.

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