

Client, Caregiver and Community Member Partnership and Engagement Strategy

About our OHT

The North Western Toronto Ontario Health Team (NWT OHT) is a collaborative initiative aimed at providing integrated and accessible healthcare services to the residents of Northwest Toronto. Established as one of the first 24 Ontario Health Teams in December 2019, the NWT OHT brings together a diverse group of healthcare providers to deliver a coordinated continuum of care. The NWT OHT is excited to have the involvement of Client, Caregiver, Community (CCC) members as we embark on this collaborative journey.

The NWT OHT has adopted the 'CCC' terminology in its broadest form to refer to those accessing health and social care and support in NWT. We are committed to meaningfully engaging with our community using the goals, principles, enablers, and domains laid out in this strategy.

As a collective, our goal through this strategy is to outline our approach for engaging and co-designing with members of the NWT OHT CCC Forum and, more broadly, with our community. This document was developed in consultation with members of the CCC Forum and will be shared across NWT OHT communication channels to enhance awareness and reach.

The strategy has been developed in alignment with the Ministry's guidance document [1], Health Quality Ontario Patient Engagement Framework [2] and the McMaster Creating Engagement Capable Environments in Ontario Health Teams; Self-Assessment Tool [3] and adapted to reflect the unique context and needs of our OHT.

Element #1: Strategic Goal

Our strategic goal is to support meaningful engagement of CCC members to gather insights and perspectives that shape coordinated, community-centred health systems.

This work is grounded in Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression practices and strengthened through partnerships across multiple community sectors. It aligns with NWT OHT's strategic priorities to advance racial equity by embedding anti-racism and anti-oppression approaches into systems, policies, practices, and services; to strengthen the delivery and coordination of care across the continuum; and to grow, connect, and deepen community partnerships and engagement. Meaningful community engagement is essential to achieving each of these strategic directions.

1. [Patient, Family and Caregiver Partnership and Engagement Strategy: Guidance Document | Supports for Ontario Health Teams | ontario.ca](#)
2. [Ontario's Patient Engagement Framework | Health Quality Ontario](#)
3. [Creating Engagement Capable Environments in Ontario Health Teams: Self-Assessment | Public and Patient Engagement Collaborative | McMaster University | pfc-capability-framework_sep-27-2023_final.pdf](#)

Element #2: Guiding Principles:

Partnership and Collaborative Co-Design

Timely and ongoing engagement is foundational to building meaningful and effective partnerships. The involvement of CCC members is critical to achieving the Quintuple Aim, enhancing patient and caregiver experiences, improving population health, enhancing provider experience, improving value, and advancing health equity. By actively engaging CCC members in the co-design, planning, implementation, and evaluation of initiatives, the NWT OHT ensures that programs and services are responsive, equitable, and grounded in lived experience. This collaborative approach strengthens partnerships and directly supports the realization of the Quintuple Aim across the OHT.

Learning

NWT OHT activities strive to involve CCC members who are prepared to engage openly and collaboratively. Participation may draw on personal experiences, perspectives, or insights into system and care improvements. To support informed contributions, opportunities will be provided for CCC members to learn about OHTs and the Ontario health system, among other topic areas identified to support their ongoing involvement in NWT OHT work.

Empowerment

CCC members should be empowered to openly express their needs, perspectives, and concerns in a safe environment.

Accountability

The OHT is accountable for ensuring meaningful engagement of clients, caregivers and community members in aspects of our work. This includes actively seeking their input through operational committees and other engagement opportunities, and demonstrating how their feedback has informed OHT decisions, improvements, and outputs.

Transparency

As an OHT, we will strive to share relevant information with CCC members to support their meaningful participation in our work. This includes access to guidelines, policies, and processes developed to support their involvement in engagement activities. We strive to use clear, concise, and accessible language in all communications with CCC partners.

Respect

We strive to show respect for client, caregiver and community members by actively demonstrating appreciation and understanding of their time, ideas, challenges, knowledge, accessibility needs, lived experiences, worldviews and cultural backgrounds. We aim to always consider the needs of CCC members and approach solutions in a sensitive manner.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

We are committed to understanding and addressing the unique needs of individuals who have been historically marginalized due to systemic racism within the healthcare system. Our goal is to ensure that opportunities for engagement remain fully accessible to all members. We will actively work to remove barriers to participation and foster a safe, inclusive environment for CCC members engaging in OHT initiatives.

Empathy and Compassion

We are committed to fostering empathy and kindness by respecting diverse perspectives. We will provide a safe, welcoming space where clients, caregivers and community members feel heard and comfortable sharing feedback.

Element # 3 Engagement Domains and Approaches

Policy, Strategy, and System Level Discussions within NWT OHT

The NWT OHT works in partnership with patients, clients, families, caregivers, and communities to advance system-level change and remove barriers, including those shaped by systemic racism. Embedding CCC members within operational committees and working groups supports a culture of co-design, where planning and solutions are developed collaboratively and reflect the diverse needs and experiences of the community. Partners contribute to shaping health priorities, strengthening outcomes, and informing future OHT plans and processes. To ensure the voices of our CCC members are included in OHT decision-making tables, one seat is reserved for a CCC member on the Senior Executive Committee (SEC), which functions as the NWT OHT board, as well as the Governance, Nominating, and Membership (GNM) Committee, which functions as a board committee. This approach fosters balanced and inclusive involvement in policy, strategy, and system level discussions within NWT OHT.

To broaden outreach and ensure inclusive participation, the OHT also offers one-time or short-term engagement opportunities (i.e., 1:1 calls, surveys, focus groups) when appropriate, based on the needs of the broader community and the nature of our

work. These varied approaches help ensure that community voices are consistently reflected in our initiatives through a variety of approaches.

Program and Service Design

The NWT OHT engages CCC members in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of programs, services, and OHT-wide initiatives. This collaborative involvement ensures that lived experience and community perspectives remain central throughout program, service and project design. CCC members may be consulted to provide insights on usability, feasibility, and community impact, helping ensure that programs and services reflect the needs, priorities, and real experiences of the populations we serve.

Engagement Approaches

These engagement approaches were adopted from the best practice guidelines of the Health Quality Ontario's Patient Engagement Framework [2].

The NWT OHT CCC has outlined methods of engagement through various levels of engagement with the NWT OHT community. In discussing these approaches, it was important to the group to address and emphasize that these methods of community engagement should consider accessibility and potential barriers throughout the process.

Share

NWT OHT aims to share and provide information in a way that is easy for clients, caregivers, and community members to understand, as well as support engagement about a program, service, policy or decision they may be involved in.

Methods:

- Social media updates
- NWT OHT website
- Newsletter
- Videos (with transcript)
- Flyers
- Emails

Consult

Health professionals, organizations and system planners strive to consult and obtain objective and feedback from CCC members on OHT initiatives related to health and social experiences that they have had to inform planning and delivery, policy, or decisions that need to be made.

Methods:

- Survey or poll

- Information sessions
- Interviews
- Participating in Operational Steering Committee/Working Group Meetings

Deliberate

Client, caregiver, and community members are engaged to discuss project initiatives related to health and social experiences that they have had to inform project planning.

Methods:

- Sharing CCC experiences through interviews/focus groups
- Patient/client journey mapping
- Ad-hoc meetings with OHT members and CCC members through working groups and committees

Collaborate

CCC members advocate and work alongside OHT health professionals, planners and organizations to find and apply solutions to a health issue, policy or discussion.

Methods:

- Committee and working group representation
- Focus groups
- Participating in strategic planning sessions

Element #4: Enablers

A Culture of Continuous Quality Improvement

An ongoing commitment from the NWT OHT to continuously improve and use the experiences, perspectives and needs of clients, caregivers and community members to identify and implement continuous improvement activities. We aim to conduct regular evaluations with CCC members using simple surveys, check-ins, and the Patient Public Engagement Tool developed by McMaster to routinely gather feedback from members.

Ongoing Orientation, Education and Communication

NWT OHT strives to continue to provide CCC members with ongoing training, education, support, tools, and resources to enable them to meaningfully contribute to their role. An onboarding process is in effect, which includes an orientation session and onboarding manual.

Commitment to Diversity, Inclusion, Health Equity and Cultural Humility

Engaging patients/clients, families and caregivers through the lens of health equity means healthcare professionals, planners, and organizations have a responsibility to engage with – and respond to – the unique needs of Indigenous, Black, or other racialized, and/or Francophone patients/clients, families or caregivers who have long been disadvantaged by the health system. It also requires a concerted effort to include and highlight voices of a diverse range of populations.

Minimizing Barriers

Recognizing the diversity of our community, the OHT will work to reduce financial, logistical, cultural, and systemic barriers to CCC participation. This includes striving to address accessibility, accommodation, and language needs, and fostering culturally informed and supportive engagement. Participation will be further enabled through education, training, resources, and appropriate support as needed.

Skillset Matching

Ensuring that the right CCC members are sought for the diverse spectrum of work (i.e. various domains of engagement) that can occur within our NWT OHT. Some CCC members with specific lived experience, knowledge, and advisory skill sets will be better positioned to contribute meaningfully when matched with the appropriate role or capacity.

Closing

This document provides a framework for NWT OHT's ongoing engagement with CCC members, grounded in meaningful community participation and strong partnerships. This strategy will be reviewed by CCC members that participated in its initial design and will then be escalated to the NWT OHT's Secretariat and the SEC for endorsement.