

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

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**3/8/2023**

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.

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## Overview

NorWest Community Health Centres (NorWest CHC) exists to provide the people of Northwestern Ontario with a safe and judgement free environment to access a wide range of health promotion and social programs and services. The core values of NorWest CHC focus on promoting the social determinants of health, social justice; improving accessible and overcoming system-based barriers; providing holistic care; promoting diversity and inclusion; and providing care to high-risk and vulnerable populations. The work that NorWest CHC engages in on a daily basis is grounded in the following values:

* Equity: We address discrimination and advocate for social justice, access to the determinants of health, and health equity;
* Access: We commit to inclusive, culturally safe and stigma free services and treating everyone with respect and dignity;
* Collaboration: We build respectful, trusting and collaborative relationships and put clients and community members at NorWest CHC of our work;
* Quality: We embrace learning, and strive to continuously improve and deliver high quality, responsive, client and evidence informed services;
* Accountability: We act with integrity and efficiently use the resources that have been entrusted to us.

In 2022/23 many of the quality initiatives completed by NorWest CHC focused on a desire to re-affirm community health and service delivery in a post pandemic world. As NorWest CHC worked to re-establish daily activities post pandemic, an emphasis was placed on ensuring programs and services focused on our most vulnerable and underserviced populations. This included include the following initiatives:

* Expanding digital knowledge and capacity to at risk and vulnerable populations through device access programs and in-person hands-on skill development. An additional example of expanding digital technology is through the implementation of OceanMD and integration with Telus PS Suite. This initiative allows for online booking of primary care services, client contact through emails, automated appointment reminders and development of the e-referral portal for both Palliative CareLink and Thunder Bay RAAM services.
* Implementation of the Thunder Bay Safer Supply Program. This program provides harm reduction services to our most vulnerable clients, through the prescription of safer alternatives to toxic street supplied opioids, as well as wrap-around services and primary care for these individuals.
* The operation of the Care Bus for the third year, which provides a safe, free service for vulnerable individuals to access and be provided with referrals to necessary community services, reduce risk of adverse affects due to extreme winter weather conditions, and receive basic necessities such as food, water and warm clothing.

For 2023/24 NorWest CHC will continue to look at aligning the quality improvement plans with the new Strategic Plan. This will be achieved through the implementation of two new corporate initiatives directed at improving the work environment for our staff and an overall approach to empower our staff to provide better care for the clients we serve in our community. The first project will focus on strengthening our organizational culture to create an environment that will enable NorWest CHC to attract and retain high quality staff with a shared desire to work in community health. The second project will focus on creating a detailed list of core competencies that will ensure our staff are comfortable in providing the care that is at the heart of our mission and values. NorWest CHC will continue to align plans and work with the City and District of Thunder Bay Ontario Health Team.

## Client engagement and partnering

### CLIENT EXPERIENCE SURVEYS

In 2022/23 NorWest CHC worked extensively to improve data collection methods to capture client experience information, and empower volunteers to help engage with clients about their experiences with both the primary care and walk-in services at NorWest CHC.

As part of the OceanMD implementation, clients who have agreed to virtual engagement and provided an email address to the organization now receive a client experience survey two days following their appointment. Surveys are also completed through other ways, for those with no or limited access to technology. These measures have increased the number of clients we collect results from. As of February 2023, NorWest CHC has collected over 750 surveys. Compared to previous years, this is more than three times as many surveys collected.

### WAY-FINDER VOLUNTEERS

NorWest CHC also worked to empower volunteers to help as WayFinders in the main waiting area. These individuals work to provide a variety of services to our waiting clients, including the collection of experience data, information on services provided, handing out of personal protection equipment (PPE) and assisting clients with navigating their appointments.

### ****KAKABEKA CLINIC****

Over the summer of 2022 NorWest CHC held a number of client engagement sessions, and completed an online survey with the aim of evaluating the service offerings of our mobile clients in rural communities. The purpose of this engagement was to determine which option provided a model of care for these individuals, either continuing with the mobile service or consolidating the services in Kakabeka Falls. The results were overwhelmingly in support of establishing a centralized location in Kakabeka Falls, which has been located on the same site as Evergreen Pharmacy. NorWest CHC opened in September and provides clients with direct access to primary care, community health worker support and foot care for the regional clients. Additional services such as access to a dietitian, midwifery care and access to mental health supports is also underway.

### LEADERSHIP THUNDER BAY

In 2022 leaders at NorWest CHC were approached to provide mentorship to community partners, local residents and business owners to develop a plan that would address safety concerns in the local area and provide support to engage community residents, community organizations, municipal leaders, emergency services and potential solutions to address them. Engagement sessions were held throughout the summer and fall with a focus on gathering information from the various sources. The corresponding plan is expected to be implemented in 2023 with support from all stakeholders.

## Provider experience

### STAFF ENGAGEMENT FOCUSED ON IMPROVEMENT

During the spring of 2022 a series of focus groups took place with primary care providers, nursing staff and the community health workers at NorWest CHC. These sessions looked to accomplish a number of goals for the organization and staff including: determining scope of work as we continue to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, reaffirming our model of care and the services we provide to clients and developing the framework that would ultimately start our work on the core competencies for all staff. Through the use of LEAN methodology and adhering to the organizations Quality Framework, a series of recommendations where developed by the working groups. By allowing those most responsible for the tasks to provide their recommendations, the resulting change initiative have been championed by staff and the improvements have been embedded in daily practices.

### WORKPLACE WELLNESS

NorWest CHC continues to seek improvement and invest in staff wellness through the leadership of the Workplace Wellness Committee and the completion of the annual workplace wellness survey. The survey provides an opportunity for staff to provide both feedback and ideas on how to improve the workplace experience. The 2023 survey was launched in February and has already seen 45 staff respond to share their perspective. Key themes from the results include a strong desire for good physical and mental health, a high importance on work/life balance, and creative events to connect with their peers at work.

Additionally, for staff who are seeking supports at NorWest CHC, the organization has provided access to the PeerConnect App. This mobile application allows anonymous peer-to-peer connection for individuals seeking supports for their mental health and wellbeing from their colleagues. Individuals can also access materials, self-assessment tools and a newsfeed with additional resources. The PeerConnect App is a part of the overall workplace wellness plan.

## Workplace Violence Prevention

### DE-ESCALATION OF VIOLENCE TRAINING

NorWest CHC continues to demonstrate a commitment to providing all staff, clients and volunteers with a safe work environment, which is free of violence and harassment. The organization continues to offer training in ‘De-escalating Violent Situations’ to all staff. In order to ensure continued compliance and provide training for all staff, NorWest CHC invested in two additional staff to receive facilitator training.

In 2022-23 all new staff received the full day training. Staff participating in the session learn vital life lessons in understanding violent situations, the anger cycle, how to identify the potential for violence and techniques for defusing anger. The training has better equipped staff to interact with our clients, understand their needs when they come to the client and anticipate potential triggers that may escalate a situation. Ultimately, this training means staff members are more comfortable working with clients in stressful situations.

### WORKPLACE VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT POLICY

In 2022/2023 NorWest CHC completed a review and update of the organization’s workplace violence and harassment policy. The purpose of this policy is to ensure NorWest CHC is committed to providing a safe work and service environment that is free from harassment, violence and threats of violence and where all people are treated with mutual respect and dignity.

### AGGRESSION/ VIOLENCE RISK ASSESSMENT

### The aggression/violence risk assessment tool was developed to categorize the historical and current behaviours of clients and create an aggregate score that notes the risk clients exhibit to self or others. This information is then flagged in the client chart to provide a visual cue to staff alerting them of potential threats of harm. The addition of this tool ensures that all interactions with clients are done in a way that ensures providers are safe and secure.

## Patient safety

### HARM REDUCTION SUPPLIES

NorWest CHC continues to work diligently at ensuring clients have barrier-free access to harm reduction supplies including safe consumption paraphernalia like needle and pipe kits, safe sex supplies and naloxone kits. These supplies are now available at multiple points of access including: Path525 safe consumption site, Safer Supply Program, the main reception area, Harm Reduction workers and provider examination rooms. The goal is to ensure that clients who engage in these activities have access to prescribed safe supply options to reduce risk of death by overdose and risk of blood borne illness.

### POLICY REVIEWS, IMPLEMENTATION AND TRAINING

The Medication Administration and Storage Policy was updated in 2022. Work was completed on an environmental scan, the policy improved to reflect best practices for controlled substances, stock medications and client specific medications. The policy covers storage, administration, documentation and disposal procedures.

A review and update was completed of the Emergency Response Policy and procedures, which outlines the steps for any medical, behavioural and facility emergencies within NorWest CHC. It was recognized that with more locations, programs and staff, a larger and more comprehensive plan was needed to efficiently respond to these events. The new policy outlines how to alert staff of an emergency, who is responsible for responding, tasks to be completed, documentation requirements and any follow up actions.

The incident report policy was reviewed and updated. The goal was to create clarity on when and how incident reports are to be completed by staff. Guidelines were added to account for circumstances and timelines required for informing affected individuals, including clients. Recognizing the growth of NorWest CHC, the reporting process was disseminated to the directors, rather than the CEO.

## Health equity

### THUNDER BAY SAFER SUPPLY PROGRAM

As of September 2022, clients experiencing health inequities and dealing with opioid use disorders are able to access the new Safer Supply program. The purpose of this program is to provide identified clients experiencing barriers to healthcare with not only a safe prescribed dose of opioids daily, but also to have access to wrap-around care provided by an interdisciplinary team of health professionals. To date thirteen clients are accessing the Safer Supply program to receive safer supply, and an additional 48 clients are receiving primary care and wrap around services. The Thunder Bay Safer Supply Program offers a safe and supportive environment that meets clients where they are at in their journey. The importance of this program is seen in the clients we serve daily.

*Client Testimonial:*

*“I like having a place to go twice a day, which gives me something to look forward to. I feel safe coming here and I get breakfast. Its little things I wasn’t able to do before and it’s so great. It gives me hope that maybe things can be better. I’m also happy to know that I won’t go through withdrawal today.*

*I get treated well here. I can be honest about what motivates me. I don’t have to lie because you know what I’m going through.”*

The Thunder Bay Safer Supply Program offers a safe and supportive environment that meets clients where they are at in their journey.

### CARE BUS

Winter of 2022 saw the return of the NorWest CHC Care Bus thanks to the support of the Thunder Bay District Social Services Administration Board, the Lakehead Social Planning Council, and Dr. Peter Centre. The Care Bus operates from 1pm to 9pm daily seven days a week, and provides free transportation throughout the city, shelter, harm reduction supplies and food to the homeless and others in need. The Care Bus is a critical service for the vulnerable populations in Thunder Bay.

### VACCINATION HESITANCY PROJECT

In collaboration with its system partners, NorWest CHC led the Peer to Peer (P2P) vaccination hesitancy project with the aim of serving the vulnerable populations of Northwestern Ontario and increasing uptake on COVID-19 vaccines. P2P focused on ensuring equitable and meaningful engagement while taking into account health disparities and social determinates of health that impact these individuals’ access to credible information and resources. The peer outreach workers were able to develop a relationship and build trust with some of the most vulnerable clients, which then allowed for meaningful discussions about vaccinations to take place.

### RAPID ACCESS ADDICTIONS MEDICINE (RAAM) LONGLAC CLINIC

NorWest CHC and Dilico Anishinabek Care partnered in 2022 to expand the Rapid Access Addiction Medicine (RAAM) clinical services to the satellite site in Longlac, Ontario. This clinic offers in-person and virtual care for clients seeking treatment for substance use. Staff are on hand to offer clients support and care through peer support, counselling, addiction medications, rapid access to psychiatry and connection with community services to support their healthcare journey.

### SENIORS DIGITAL EQUITY

Starting in October of 2022 NorWest CHC has hosted a Seniors Peer Led IT Group. The initiative focuses on providing assistance to individuals who received an “IT prescription” with improving their digital literacy. Qualified applicants of the program are provided with a tablet on loan and resources on safe use in the digital environment. One-on-one peer support is available weekly to help with any questions and provide additional skills training such as using online banking, cyber security and using other virtual programs. The program helps mentor valuable life skills for individuals who previously struggled in the digital age.

As well, the program partners with Age Friendly Thunder Bay to host a series of webinars with additional information. Topics include accessibility features on devices and accessing online health information.

## Contact Information

NorWest Community Health Centres (NorWest CHC)

525 Simpson Street

Thunder Bay, ON P7C 3J6

T (807) 622-8235

https://www.norwestchc.org/

## Sign-off

It is recommended that the following individuals review and sign-off on your organization’s Quality Improvement Plan (where applicable):

I have reviewed and approved our organization’s Quality Improvement Plan

Board Chair \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (signature)

Quality Committee Chair or delegate \_\_\_Mark Maranzan\_\_ (signature)

Executive Director/Administrative Lead \_\_\_Juanita Lawson\_\_\_\_\_ (signature)

Other leadership as appropriate \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (signature)