

Recommendations from the Northern Ontario Long-Term Care Homes Needs Study



**Update Report
February 2022**



**LE RÉSEAU DU MIEUX-ÊTRE
FRANCOPHONE
DU NORD DE L'ONTARIO**

PREAMBLE

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the recommendations from [a study completed by the Réseau du mieux-être francophone du Nord de l'Ontario \(Réseau\) in 2017](#). The actions include identifying homes where French-language services could be offered, accompanying those homes where French-language services could be improved and developing strategies to implement culturally appropriate care.

In the context of this report, we have identified themes that were shared with us or that we became aware of through working with our partners. The goal is to capture the essence of the real experience of Francophone residents in long-term care homes as well as offer courses of action which will allow us to ensure better planning of French language services in long-term care homes throughout Northern Ontario.

[The population in Northern Ontario is an aging population](#) and accessing health care as well as home care is often limited for the general population, and it is particularly so for Francophones. Francophones in Northern Ontario are often located in rural areas or in communities with limited access to long-term care beds. The vast geography of the region poses certain challenges to access services which are culturally appropriate and close to their families.

The pandemic has led us to reflect on new ways of moving this project forward to ensure that the importance of the equitable offer of and access to French language services is more evident within the long-term care sector. We have also had to put certain activities on hold; these are identified later in this report and will be part of the next steps for the project.

It is important to highlight the changes that have taken place since the beginning of the project in the long-term and home care sector and in the community setting. In June 2019, the government of Ontario created the Ministry of Long-Term Care to ensure better coordination of services. In April 2021, the Local Health Integration Networks (LHIN) were transferred to Ontario Health, except for Home and Community Care Support Services. During the transition stage, these services will be managed by the Ministry of Health and will eventually be entrusted to the Ontario Health Teams.



Even though one component of the project is ending, we realize that many of the planned activities could not be carried out due to the pandemic. The *Réseau* will continue to plan and collaborate with the long-term care homes and Home and Community Care Support Services to provide support and improvement to services in French in this sector.

We appreciate the support and collaboration from our partners in this study. We are equally cognizant of the impact of COVID-19 on long-term care homes and wish to highlight the dedication and courage of the residents and front-line workers in long-term care homes, as well as the caregivers and families who have faced numerous challenge during this difficult period.

We wish to recognize the collaboration and support of Ontario Health North for the realization of this project, as well as Health Canada for the project funding.

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APPROACH



In 2016, the *Réseau* conducted a needs assessment on long-term care homes in Northern Ontario. This study was initiated as a result of multiple requests from Northern Francophone communities to identify the challenges that Francophones living in minority situations faced while living in long-term care homes. The study was carried out in collaboration with northern long-term care homes, as well as the North East and North West LHINs, now known as Ontario Health North.

The report's recommendations deal with the importance of culturally appropriate care, the linguistic variable, the designation and identification of homes and the creation of community partnerships to ensure the offer of French language services. More information on the study can be found at [Needs Study: Long-Term Care Homes in the Northeastern Ontario Region, 2017](#) and [Needs Study: Long-Term Care Homes in the Northwestern Ontario Region, 2017](#).

To ensure that the information collected throughout the project reflects the reality on the ground, we have shared the data and the recommendations with our partners.

PRESENTATIONS FOR LONG-TERM CARE HOMES

Throughout the summer and fall of 2018, the *Réseau*, in collaboration with the North East and North West LHINs (now known as Ontario Health North), presented the findings of the study as well as the project's next steps to administrators of the long-term care homes in Northern Ontario. The information was well-received by the participants who indicated an interest in collaborating with us to provide Francophone residents with improved access to French-language services.

THEME-BASED MEETINGS AND COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS

The *Réseau* provided numerous presentations and held consultations with various partners, community groups and Carrefours santé (Health Hubs) to validate the needs and recommendations that were identified in the study. The information that was collected during the consultations helped to inform our next steps and develop resources, best practices, and strategies for offering culturally appropriate services in long-term care homes. These are a few examples of suggestions made during the consultations:

- ❖ Identify the resident's language at the time of the placement request by Home and Community Care Support Services.
- ❖ Match Francophone residents with Francophone staff.
- ❖ Ensure that French language documentation is available and at an appropriate literacy level in French, for Francophone residents and their families.
- ❖ Ensure that staff responsible for activities organize culturally appropriate activities in the homes.
- ❖ Make training on active offer of services in French mandatory for all staff.
- ❖ Highlight the importance of community partnerships.
- ❖ Establish a bilingual organisational culture.
- ❖ Focus on the importance of French language services and the obligations that identified or designated long-term care homes have pursuant to the *French Language Services Act*.

DEVELOP TOOLS AND RESOURCES

Online tools and resources to facilitate the sharing of information were created to better meet the needs identified by long-term care homes.

ACTIVITY UPDATE

To better represent the project's recommendations, we have collated the activities in four themes:

1. Provision of culturally appropriate care
 - 1.1. Cultural designation process and designation of Francophone beds
 - 1.2. Sharing of best practices and resources
2. Identification and designation
3. Human resources
4. Identification and placement of Francophone residents

Due to the challenges brought on by the pandemic, all activities could not be undertaken during this phase of the project. These activities are listed in the "next steps" section of the report and will be addressed in the coming year.

1. PROVISION OF CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE CARE

2017 Report Recommendations	North East: Recommendations 1, 2, 3, and 8 North West: Recommendations 1, 4 and 8
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The provision of culturally appropriate care is one of the main components needed to establish an environment which promotes the improvement of French language services and health care. Culturally appropriate care in long-term care homes means that the linguistic and cultural component is reflected and present at all levels of care and across all programs and services: administration, human resources, therapy, nursing care, etc. Furthermore, it is also represented in food services, social activities, and various cultural and religious programs.

Further to the 2017 report recommendations, the *Réseau* has focussed on two approaches to improving the provision of culturally appropriate care:

1. develop a cultural designation process and support the designation of Francophone beds; and
2. share best practices for culturally appropriate care.

1.1 Cultural designation process and designation of Francophone Beds

[Although there are a few models of cultural designation in Ontario](#), there is currently no long-term care home in Northern Ontario which has a Francophone cultural designation. Having reviewed several studies, we also determined that a clear cultural designation process does not exist. It is important to note that cultural designation is a voluntary designation.

A working group was established in collaboration with the *Réseau*, the Champlain LHIN (Ontario Health East), the North East LHIN (Ontario Health North) and the *Réseau des services de santé en français de l'Est de l'Ontario* to examine the possibility of implementing a cultural designation process. The working group determined that, given the differences in realities between the regions of Ontario, using a one-size fits all approach for the Francophone cultural designation would not be possible.



Because Francophones are spread out across a vast area, designating a wing or a floor of a long-term care home where there are Francophones is a concept worth exploring further for Northern Ontario. This has been further defined in the [submission](#) from the *Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario (AFO)* and the *Fédération des aînés et des retraités francophones de l'Ontario (FARFO)* to the Standing Committee of the Legislative Assembly on Bill 37 (November 2021), *Providing More Care, Protecting Seniors, and Building More Beds Act, 2021*. The

inclusion of designated Francophone beds or a cultural designation (as is the case under *section 173 of Regulation 79/10 of the Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007* - now repealed), is essential to ensure equitable access to Francophone beds and services in long-term care homes.

It is also important that a clear definition on what constitutes a Francophone bed be developed and implemented to ensure that these beds are protected for Francophones.

We also recommended that all homes in Northern Ontario increase their capacity to offer services in French as well as culturally appropriate care and culturally adapted activities, by sharing best practices, resources and tools which meet the homes' needs.

1.2 Sharing best practices and resources

During the consultations with the homes, it was determined that several homes had very limited resources to support them in improving French language services. These homes highlighted a need for easily accessible, clear, and specific resources, that could be easily adapted from one home to another.

As a result, three tools were created to support the homes:

- a. a data bank of best practices for culturally appropriate care
- b. video testimonials on how to implement best practices
- c. a training module on Culturally Appropriate Care for Francophones in Long-Term Care Homes

a. Data bank of best practices for culturally appropriate care

We invited long-term care homes in the North to participate in a project aimed at gathering best practices for culturally appropriate care for Francophones. Four homes answered the call: *Foyer des Pionniers*, Smooth Rock Falls Hospital long-term care unit, Pioneer Manor and *Au Château*. These homes committed to developing an action plan for the implementation of culturally appropriate care for Francophones as well as identifying and implementing best practices. The information gathered provided content for the data bank, the video testimonials, and the training modules.

In addition to the compilation of information on best practices provided by the homes in Northern Ontario, further information was also collected from other homes located elsewhere in the province.

The data base of tools for culturally appropriate care can be found [here](#). This link brings users to the Tools and Resources section of the *Réseau's* Website with pre established filters to find specific resources based on the long-term care sector and culturally appropriate care.

b. Video testimonials on how to implement best practices

The videos were created as training and accompaniment tools to underline the importance of French language services in long-term care homes. The objectives of the videos are:

- ❖ Provide advice on how to implement culturally appropriate activities for Francophones;
- ❖ Raise awareness of the importance of community engagement;
- ❖ Promote awareness of the opportunities for Francophone partnerships.

The four videos in this series are:

- ❖ [Joanne's experience: French Language Services in Long-Term Care](#)
- ❖ [Culturally Appropriate Care for Francophones in Long-Term Care](#)
- ❖ [Culturally adapted activities for Francophones](#)
- ❖ [Francophone Community Partnerships in Long-Term Care](#)

c. Training Module

In an effort to provide quick access to the information gathered in this project, the *Réseau* developed an online training module titled, *Culturally Appropriate Care for Francophones in Long-Term Care Homes*. This training module, available on activeoffertraining.ca, is geared to people who work in the long-term care sector. The training is free and takes about 45 minutes to complete and is comprised of the following four sections:

- ❖ Importance of active offer of French language services
- ❖ Importance of culturally appropriate care for Francophones
- ❖ Culturally appropriate activities for Francophones
- ❖ Partnerships with the Francophone community

The training aims to achieving the following outcomes in your organization :

- ❖ Provide culturally appropriate services and programs to Francophones
- ❖ Develop the capacity to actively offer French language health services
- ❖ Identify Francophone residents and match them with Francophone staff
- ❖ Develop community partnerships

2. IDENTIFICATION AND DESIGNATION

2017 Report Recommendations

North East: [Recommendations 4 and 5](#)
North West: [Recommendation 2](#)

The importance of actively offering and building the capacity to offer French language services is highlighted as a priority for the entire long-term care sector. According to the results of the [Annual French Language Services Reports](#), the identification of additional homes could improve the offer of French language services on the entire health care continuum as well as the alignment and offer of French language services to Francophone residents.

In order to increase the capacity to actively offer French language services in the long-term care sector as a whole, long-term care homes should establish policies and best practices which will ensure the implementation of the active offer. The Annual French Language Services Report which is completed by long-term care homes is the tool which is used to measure their capacity and progress towards implementing the active offer as well as their continued fulfillment of the requirements for identification or designation.



The [modernized French Language Services Act](#) adopted on December 9, 2021 should facilitate the designation and identification process, along with the active offer of French language services in long-term care homes. In addition, [an amendment to the definition of "government agency"](#) in the *French Language Services Act* was passed in June 2021, allowing municipal homes to be designated. Municipal homes had never been subject to the *French Language Services Act* before.



Identification in the North West

In June 2019, in collaboration with the North West LHIN, we identified two homes in the North West which are required to develop and implement a French language Services plan, ensure the provision of French language services in accordance with their current capacity and work towards improving their capacity; these are the Board of Management of the District of Kenora Home for the Aged (Princess Court) and Long-Term Care Unit of the Nipigon District Memorial Hospital.

Identification in the North East

The identification process of long-term care homes has been put on hold because of the pandemic. Discussions and the development of an identification process for the North East are ongoing.

Designation in the North East

The five homes identified for designation in the 2017 report continue to receive support from the *Réseau* to improve their offer of French language services.

3. HUMAN RESOURCES

2017 Report Recommendations

North East: [Recommendation 6](#)
North West: [Recommendation 5](#)

The identification of Francophone human resources across the entire region helps us to better understand the capacity of long-term care homes to offer services in French. The information collected in the Annual French Language Services Reports and from a mapping exercise assist with the year over year comparison of the progress the long-term care homes are making in their capacity to offer services in French.

The gaps in Francophone human resources were felt more than ever during the pandemic. Numerous homes faced a serious staffing shortage, which had an impact on the entire sector. Fortunately, the government implemented strategies to assist Personal Support Workers. We must continue to be vigilant in ensuring that the Francophone lens is taken into consideration when implementing strategies relating to human resources, for example:

- ❖ Training
- ❖ Recrutement
- ❖ Wage increase

It is equally important for homes to establish strategies to meet the needs of their Francophone residents. Among the best practices that have been compiled, three stand out as exemplary and could be adopted in all long-term care homes:

- ❖ Family caregivers play a crucial role in the life of their resident family members and in supporting staff. Continuous and daily contact with family is essential when a resident does not speak English and where the staff is not able to provide French language services; this allows for any changes in health status or health care needs to be confirmed, etc.
- ❖ The implementation of mechanisms to match Francophone residents with Francophone staff.
- ❖ A survey to identify Francophone staff and evaluation of the oral and written French skills of candidates.

4. IDENTIFICATION AND PLACEMENT OF RESIDENTS

2017 Report Recommendations	North East: Recommendations 7 and 9 North West: Recommendation 3 and 7
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Client identification

The identification of the resident's language is recorded at the time of the request for a long-term care placement.

The *Réseau* collaborated with Ontario Health North to confirm whether the linguistic variable to identify Francophones was being applied during the placement request process. According to the Client Health & Related Information System-CHRIS, the three questions used to identify a resident's language are: 1. Mother tongue; 2. Preferred official language; 3. Preferred language for service.

Unfortunately, the CHRIS platform has not adopted the recommended questions stated in the [Joint Position Statement on the Linguistic Variable](#) from the French Health Planning Entities. It is worth noting that in the health context, it is [recommended to ask one's mother tongue rather than the language of preference](#). When feeling vulnerable, Francophones will not ask for services in French for fear that their linguistic needs will negatively impact the quality, accessibility and wait times relating to services. Linguistic "preference" can change from one context to another, and the person may not have the opportunity to make this known to staff. Whereas mother tongue does not change.

It is unfortunate that the information collected in the CHRIS data base does not always follow the person when placed in a long-term care home. This became evident during the mapping exercise where we gathered information on the number of Francophone residents and the number of Francophone staff in comparison to the communities where there is a significant Francophone population. The information on the language of the resident was not reliable given that most homes did not have an established process to identify Francophone residents. Identifying mother tongue when providing services to residents is key when considering the active offer of French language services and the implementation of culturally appropriate care.

Establishing an identification process for Francophone residents remains a priority. A few examples of best practices that homes could adopt are:

- ❖ Posting the resident's mother tongue on their room door in order to create an awareness among the home's staff;
- ❖ Once they are identified, the Francophone residents are grouped together and assigned to Francophone/bilingual staff.



Resident placement

The aging Francophone population also faces linguistic and cultural barriers which directly impact wait times or placement in a home. It is necessary for culturally appropriate care to be available in homes, especially the homes located in designated communities where there is a significant Francophone population. According to the information obtained in June 2020, further to the community engagement sessions with Francophones in Northern Ontario [Report of June 2020 Community engagements and Progress to Date](#), having access to services in French plays an important role in ensuring the wellness of seniors and their families. It is important for seniors and their families to be able to make informed decisions regarding their placement and French language service needs.

Further to the consultations with the Home and Community Care teams in the North East and North West LHINs, we realized that a person may refuse a placement in a home if the placement is not in the home of their choice. Language can be cited as the reason for refusal. That said, refusal for reasons of linguistic need is rarely used because people fear having to wait much longer for a placement. The reality for many seniors and their families is that the choice of homes is limited, and a timelier placement is often needed due to a crisis. This is again indicative of the importance of providing culturally appropriate care in all long-term care homes.

NEXT STEPS



Despite the fact that funding for this long-term care project is ending, the work with the long-term homes will continue in order to ensure the ongoing active offer of French language services and culturally appropriate care. We have identified recommendations aimed at increasing the long-term care sector's capacity to offer French language services in the hopes of influencing this sector's ability to better respond to the needs of Francophone residents and their families.

Identification of long-term care homes in the North East

The process of identifying long-term care homes was put on hold due to the pandemic. The discussions and development of the identification process for the North East will resume at a more appropriate time.

Designation of long-term care homes in the North East

Albeit the ongoing work with the five homes which were identified for designation in the [2017 Report - Needs Study: Long-Term Care Homes in the Northeastern Ontario Region](#), some of these homes have made significant progress towards achieving the designation requirements, whereas others have progressed at a slower rate in achieving these same requirements. An action plan will be developed with Ontario Health North to ensure these homes increase their capacity to offer French language services.

Identification of Francophone residents

It is essential to develop a process to identify Francophone residents to ensure the provision of care in a safe manner. As a first step, sharing best practices with those homes that do not have such a process in place will be a priority. The data analysis from the Annual French Language Services Report will be used to determine which homes to work with.

Active Offer Training

The *Réseau* will support Ontario Health North to implement a strategy to encourage all long-term care sector employees to complete the [Active Offer Training](#) and the online training *Culturally appropriate care for Francophones in Long-Term Care Homes*.



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activeoffertraining.ca

Improved capacity to offer French language services in identified homes

The *Réseau* will support the identified homes to increase their capacity to offer French language services through the implementation of a strategy to complete each year a selected number of designation requirements.

Clarification of the meaning of Francophone beds

Provincial funding provided in accordance with the criteria for Francophone beds is confusing. It will be important to clarify with the Ministry of Long-Term Care that funding for Francophone beds be granted in accordance with a French language services accountability agreement. It will be important to clarify how the needs of Francophones will be taken into consideration when new beds are added to a home. The addition of new Francophone beds must ensure that the homes are accountable under the French Language Services Act. For example, beds must be allocated to identified or designated homes with the capacity to provide French language services.



Raise awareness among Care Coordinators

We recognize that there is a need to further develop mechanisms to link a resident's linguistic identity to their choice of home placement. The Care Coordinators would benefit from training on the importance of culturally appropriate care in the context of long-term care placement requests for Francophones.

Culturally appropriate care

The aging Francophone population also faces linguistic and cultural barriers which have a direct impact on wait times and obtaining a placement in a home. There would need to be a guarantee that culturally appropriate care is available for Francophones in most homes.

Cultural designation and designation of Francophone Beds

The development of a Francophone cultural designation model and the designation of Francophone beds is required to ensure long-term care homes meet the needs of Francophones located across the vast expanse of Northern Ontario.

CONCLUSION

We have learned through this study that the Francophone population in Northern Ontario is aging, its members are generally dispersed across the North and they can be found in rural areas or in communities where there is limited access to long-term care beds or homes. This demonstrates the ongoing need to find innovative models that long-term care homes could easily adopt in order to respond to the numerous challenges faced by Francophones in minority situations who reside in long-term care homes in Northern Ontario.

Although much has changed since the beginning of the study in 2016, and many challenges have surfaced such as changes to the healthcare system, the pandemic and access to reliable and representative data, the *Réseau* has been able to continue advancing this work. It is thanks to many collaborations that we have been able to not only make recommendations, but also build strong partnerships, gather current best practices, and support homes in developing resources and tools to provide culturally appropriate care to Francophones.

