



Equitable Health Services for Francophones: At the Heart of Our Work

Annual Report 2021-2022



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

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Legend

aféséo: Association francophone à l'éducation et des services à l'enfance de l'Ontario

AFO: Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario

Réseau: Réseau du mieux-être francophone du Nord de l'Ontario

RISE: Rapid-Improvement Support and Exchange

SSF: Société Santé en français

OHN: Ontario Health North

We have come a long way

This year, we are winding up our strategic plan which had been extended for an additional year given the transformation of the healthcare system as well as the circumstances due to the pandemic. It is remarkable to see what we have accomplished over the last six years. Looking back over the past few years, we can see that the Réseau has more data for planning purposes and that Francophones are better heard and informed. Health service providers and decision-makers, for their part, are better equipped and informed. With respect to active offer, health care personnel are better trained and the concept has gained popularity to the point where it was enshrined in the modernized *French Language Services Act*.

Despite the progress made in recent years, there is still much work to do to ensure that Francophones have equitable access to health care services in their language. The transformation of Ontario's health care system is proceeding slowly in the context of the pandemic. This year was particularly challenging for French language services at the political level. Despite ongoing efforts, the ability to advance French language health service issues has been more difficult. These issues have been overshadowed by the pandemic crisis and other priority issues. This realization will guide the next strategic planning exercise which we have been working on over the past year.

This year, the Réseau is losing a founding member of its Board of Directors. Angèle Brunelle, who has served on the Board of Directors for almost twenty years, is completing her final term. We are fortunate and grateful to have benefited from her expertise in governance, her knowledge of Francophone health issues as well as her solid presence in Northwestern Ontario. During her tenure on the Board, Angèle served on several strategic committees. She will continue to represent the voices of Northern francophones as she continues to be the Northern representative on the Minister of Health's French Language Services Advisory Council and will also continue to represent the Réseau on the Board of the Société Santé en Français. On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to thank Angèle for the many years she devoted to the Réseau.

Thank you to all the members of the Board of Directors for another year where equitable health services for Francophones were at the heart of our work.



Collin Bourgeois
Chair
Board of Directors

Continuous adaptation

In the last year, the Réseau has maintained a strong presence for French language services in a system that has been hard hit by the health crisis. It has been a difficult year for French language services even with certain improvements, such as the modernisation of the *French Language Services Act*. Despite this, we are committed to finding ways to collaborate strategically with government bodies on issues that affect all Francophones in the province.

Pandemic aside, great things were accomplished over the last year. Our nomination as a Planning Entity was renewed until December 2023. In addition, our provincial voice, the Regroupement provincial de planification en santé en français de l'Ontario was established and hired its first Executive Director. At the regional level, we continued our collaboration with Ontario Health North (OHN) as part of the final year of our joint action plan. We were able to adapt to the impacts of the pandemic, thanks to the creativity of the team and the engagement of our partners. Through our provincial and national projects, we have created and developed new resources for health service providers, while others, such as the activeoffertraining.ca, have been adapted to make them accessible to health care staff.

Legislative and administrative changes on a provincial level have impacted the Réseau's capacity to support providers in the field. The momentum that had been achieved over the past 10 years has greatly decreased. We recognize that change takes time, and that we must all adapt to these new realities. We strive to remain optimistic that French language services will continue to be an important element of the healthcare system. Rest assured, we remain vigilant, and we continue to work with all our partners to ensure that French language health services are an ongoing priority.

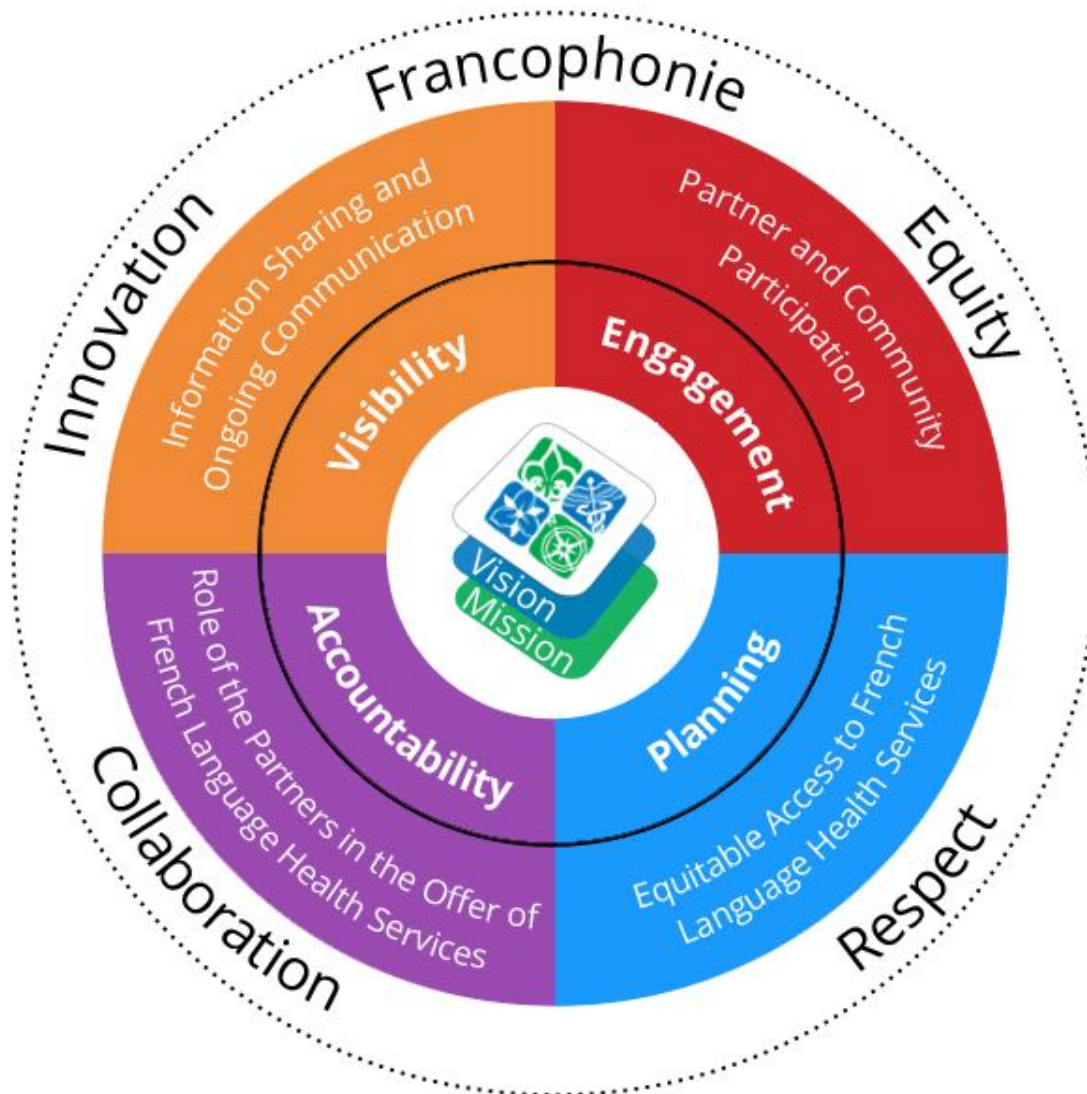
I would like to thank the Board of Directors and my extraordinary team for all the work that has been accomplished over the last year as well as their unconditional support during these challenging times. Despite the challenges, French language services will always be at the heart of our work, and we will continue to work for you, the Francophones in our Northern communities.



Diane Quintas
Executive Director

Our 2016–2021 Strategic Objectives

Extended to 2021–2022



Our Values

Francophonie

Promote the Francophone culture and its regional characteristics.

Équity

Provide access to health services that respond to individual needs.

Respect

Act in a fair and impartial manner.

Collaboration

Build and enhance strategic partnerships.

Innovation

Be creative in the development and implementation of strategies.

Committed to Create Adapted Content

Participation by our partners and the voice of the community relating to French language services continue to be a priority for the Réseau. Nevertheless, given that the pandemic imposed an additional burden on individuals and organisations, our approach was modified. The engagement activities have focused more on planning, sharing of resources, validating next steps for our projects as well as the importance of the active offer of services in French.

The Réseau sought the expertise of its partners for the development of complementary modules for the active offer training in order to meet the needs of various sectors and to enable them to better serve Francophones. Validation sessions were held throughout the year to ensure that the content developed was appropriate for the target audience of each module.

- ❖ Validation sessions with partners in immigration for the module on French language services for Francophone immigrants
- ❖ Validation sessions with health providers for the content of the active offer module relating to mental health and addictions
- ❖ Collaboration with NOSM University and physicians in the region to develop an active offer module in primary care

Franco-santé

The Franco-santé project is an initiative for Francophone and Francophile students who are registered in English-language postsecondary health training programs. The Réseau has offered six workshops and training sessions to 29 participants to raise awareness on the importance of offering French language health services and to strengthen the competencies they need to offer health services to Francophone clients.

Participants
29

**Activities
Offered**
6

Collaboration with NOSM University

The collaboration with NOSM University continued this year. A member of the Réseau's team is chairing NOSM University's Francophone Reference Group, which provides numerous opportunities for collaboration and exchange. During this past year, the Réseau had the opportunity to work with the institution on a recommendation report for a pathway to medicine in French. The Réseau is very pleased that NOSM University has put a plan in place wherein all students, staff and faculty will be required to take the active offer training. The institution has also collaborated with the Réseau in the development of a module on active offer in primary care.

Presentations and Webinars

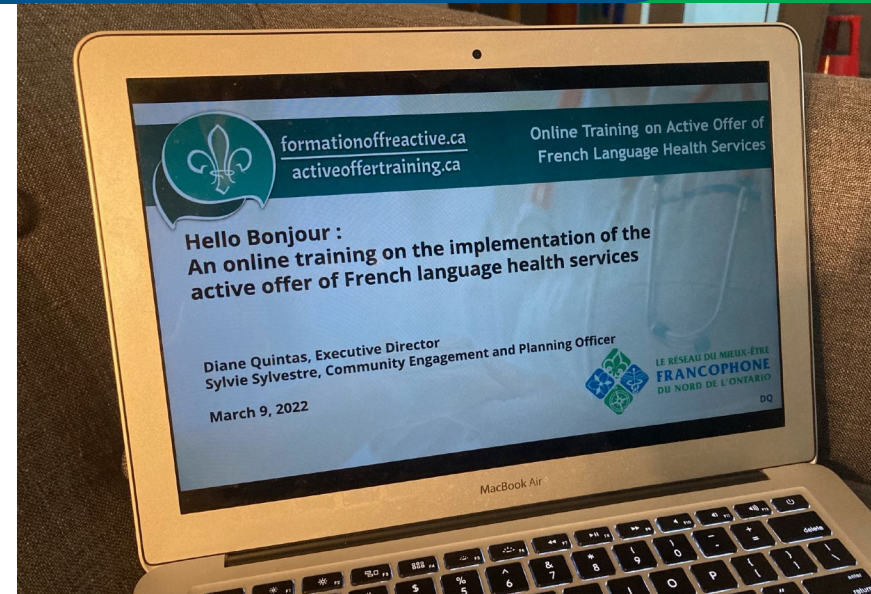
This year, the Réseau had the opportunity to deliver some thirty presentations and webinars to various partner groups reaching nearly 500 participants from the Francophone community, health care service providers and educational institutions.

Participants

469

Presentations
Offered

29



Theme	Number
Active offer and activeoffertraining.ca	11
Equity and the Needs of Francophones	1
Workshop <i>L'interprétation et toi</i>	3
Designation, Identification and the <i>French Language Services Act</i>	2
Role of the Réseau	2
Results of the project <i>Improving the Francophone Experience in Healthcare</i>	7
Other themes	1

A pat on the back: The presentations developed by the Réseau have been shared, at their request, with other Réseaux and Planning Entities for inspiration for their presentations.

Results from the Carrefours *and* Tables santé

This year, the meetings of the *Carrefours* and *Tables santé* provided an opportunity to validate the recommendations and next steps of the Réseau's projects. Among other things, the participants appreciated the presentation of the report on [Improving the Francophone Experience in Healthcare](#). In addition, these are a few examples of results attained by the *Carrefours* with the support of the Réseau:

- ❖ *Carrefour santé de Thunder Bay*: The Réseau organized a meeting with the *Breaking Free* program to provide feedback on the program in order to improve promotion and uptake among the Francophone population
- ❖ *Carrefour santé Chapleau-Foleyet-Sultan*: The Réseau facilitated a meeting with the Executive Director of Chapleau Health Services. The provider agreed to roll out the Francophone experience in long-term care survey created by the Réseau, to make it available online and to find staff members and volunteers to help people who are not as comfortable with technology to complete the survey
- ❖ *Table santé de Sault-Ste-Marie*: Collaboration in the development and circulation of a survey from the *Centre francophone du Sault-Ste-Marie* (CFSSM) which identified access to French language health services as an important issue for Francophones in the region

*Carrefours and
Tables santé
Meetings*

29

Networking: the Impact for Communities

It is often difficult to measure the impact of networking with partners in different sectors. The Réseau facilitates the connection between health care services providers and Francophone communities in order to create opportunities for exchange and collaboration. Here are some examples where networking had a concrete impact on Francophones:

- ❖ Organized a presentation by the identified service provider, the Children's Center Thunder Bay, to the Conseil scolaire de district catholique des Aurores boréales' Special Needs Children Committee in order to support their discussion of new mental health services in French
- ❖ Matched a health care service provider looking to hire staff with a postsecondary institution to discuss student placements and job postings in the office administration field
- ❖ Shared resources such as the translation and interpretation services of l'Accueil francophone de Thunder Bay with health care service providers
- ❖ Helped connect providers in the Northeast and Northwest in order to increase French language services capacity in the Northwest

The Francophone Lens

The Réseau continued to act as a Francophone lens by participating in various planning committees to influence decision-making on health issues for Francophones. At these meetings, the Réseau shared solutions, tools and resources in order to improve French language health services in different settings. Through its projects, the Réseau has also collaborated with several partners to implement solutions that will improve the experience of Francophones. The Réseau also continued to work collaboratively with Health Ontario teams and public health units.

Overview of Key Moments

Provincial

- Establishment of the Regroupement provincial de planification en santé en français de l'Ontario, which will act as an umbrella organization for the regional Entities and the hiring of its first Executive Director
- Presence in matters surrounding health issues for Francophones by the Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario (AFO), including through a day of reflection on health issues
- Contribution to the AFO Brief on Long-Term Care - [Mémoire remis dans le cadre de l'étude du comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative sur le projet de loi 37, Loi de 2021 visant à offrir davantage de soins à protéger les personnes âgées et à ouvrir plus de lits](#) (in French only)
- [Recommendations issued](#), such as, the return to an independent Commissioner; making public health units and Ontario Health Teams subject to the *French Language Services Act*; identification of Francophone patients; establishment of Francophone community health centers, as a result of public consultations on the modernized [French Language Services Act](#) which received Royal Assent on December 9, 2021

Federal

Support, through the Société Santé en français, for [Bill C-13: Official Languages Act](#) introduced on March 2, 2022 by the Ministry of Official Languages which will allow for substantial gains relative to the protection and promotion of French in this country.

Observed gains in the modernized *French Language Services Act*:

- ❖ Governmental agencies and service providers are required that French language services are easily accessible in accordance with the principle of the **active offer**
- ❖ Possibility of designating **a greater number of points of service** throughout the province, even in those regions which are not designated under the *French Language Services Act*
- ❖ New provision which **guarantees an update** of the Act once every 10 years

RISE Webinar

[Supporting OHTs to meet their requirements under the French Language Services Act: The Active Offer of French Language Health Services online training](#)

The Réseau would like to **congratulate** the **Public Health Units** that **responded to the needs** of the Francophone communities or, at the very least, **have improved** their services in French.

Participation as a Member of the Ontario Health Teams

The Réseau is recognized as a leader in providing advice on French language health services to the Northern Ontario Health Teams. For example, thanks to the Réseau's influence, the Northwestern Ontario Integrated Health Care Working Group engaged with the Francophone community and developed a bilingual website. Again this year, the Réseau validated the content, as it relates to services offered in French and to Francophones, in new submissions like the one from Timmins in March. French language services were identified as a priority. The Réseau is also on the committee which is responsible for developing an equity framework for the Nipissing Wellness Ontario Health Team.

The Réseau was also invited to present active offer training to the Ontario Health Teams across the province, 87 people participated. The webinar was organised by Rapid-Improvement Support and Exchange (RISE), a group funded by the Ministry to support the Ontario Health Teams.

Public Health and COVID-19

The Réseau continues its ongoing engagement with public health units in the North to ensure active offer of services in French in vaccination clinics and in the dissemination of information in French on COVID-19. The Réseau had the opportunity to present to the Thunder Bay and Porcupine Health Units. The services and access to information in French are especially important in the context of a pandemic. There is still work to do, however, we have definitely seen the importance that French language services can have at the public health level and the role that the Réseau can take to continue supporting them.

The Réseau also worked at the provincial level with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Francophone Affairs to highlight the importance of making the Public Health Units subject to the *French Language Services Act*; unfortunately, this change was not included in the new legislation.



Access to French Language Services in Long-term Care Homes

The [Recommendation Report Update](#) was published in February 2022. These are the results of the project in the last year:

- ❖ Identification of four long term care homes for the provision of French language services
- ❖ Launch of the training module: *Culturally Appropriate Care for Francophones in Long term Care Homes*, as a complementary module on the [activeoffertraining.ca](#) platform

Example of **resources created by partners** as part of the **Healthy Early Years** project :

- ❖ Podcast [Parenthèse](#)
- ❖ Game [Tire-toi une bûche](#)
- ❖ Training capsules [Cap sur le bien-être](#)

Francophone Immigration Health

This provincial project is managed by our partner the Réseau franco-santé du Sud de l'Ontario. The goal of the project is to strengthen the health system's capacity to provide culturally sensitive health care services for Francophone immigrants. As part of this project, a study suggested changes to the active offer training. As a result, the Réseau adapted the content of the training and developed a complementary module, *Active offer of health services in French to Francophone immigrants in Ontario*, which will soon be available on the [activeoffertraining.ca](#) platform.

Healthy Early Years

The Réseau's role in this project is to bring the Ontario partners together and roll out the [Plan de services communautaires pour la petite enfance en santé](#) (Community Services Plan for Healthy Early Childhood) (in French only). The partners responsible for implementing the plan's activities via their projects are Health Nexus and the *Association francophone à l'éducation des services à l'enfance de l'Ontario (aféseo)*.

Improving the Francophone Experience in Healthcare

The [project's final report](#) was released in December 2021. In recent years, the Réseau carried out this project to measure Francophones' experience in healthcare. Although the pandemic has somewhat disrupted plans, the findings are interesting and validate the importance of the active offer of health services in French. A series of resources were also developed and a number of providers have already begun using the experience questionnaire that resulted from this project.

Difficult to Measure Progress

This year, several events have had an impact on the Réseau's ability to move health services providers forward in their accountability for French language services. The transfer to a new platform for French language services reporting, the modernized *French Language Services Act* with a new tool for designation, as well as pressures on providers due to the pandemic are examples of this. Not having received the French language services analysis reports for 2020-2021 adds to the list of events that had an impact on our capacity to measure the progress of providers. As a result, the majority of the work focussed on providing resources to improve access to French language services.

Thanks to the **support of the Réseau** and Ontario Health North, **100% of the health service providers** submitted their 2020-2021 **French language services report** via the OZi platform.

New Database on French Language Services

Normally, the Réseau uses the OZi platform to support the designated, identified, and non-identified providers in planning French language services, the evaluation of designated providers, and the compliance of designated providers all year long. However, this year, the Ministry of Health developed a new database which replaced OZi. The migration of data to this new platform took longer than expected and slowed down all these processes. The new database will be used for the 2021-2022 providers' French language services reports.

Designation and Identification Support

In addition to the platform change for reporting French language services by the ministry of Health, the Ministry of Francophone Affairs made amendments to the designation criteria and a new tool for submitting designation requests was also launched. Even with all these changes, we were able to move forward on certain activities, including the identification, by Ontario Health Nord, of four long-term care homes in response to a recommendation by the Réseau and two new requests for designation which are pending approval. The Réseau also evaluated two designated providers. Ten assessments were planned, however the change to the number of designation criteria and the transition to the new tools interrupted the process.

Evaluated
Designations

2

Pending
Request for
Designation

2

Newly
Identified
Providers
North East

4

Informing Francophones

Even without being physically present in the regions, the Réseau continues to be present and visible virtually. The Bulletin INFO Newsletter is as popular as ever and well-liked by members and partners. Facebook and Twitter social media platforms are also used to inform Francophones about upcoming activities, news items and sharing information relating to health. The Réseau has also succeeded in making its way into a few mainstream media articles and interviews (all available in French only).

[Des lits Francophones toujours insuffisants dans les foyers de soins de longue durée](#) (Long-term care beds continue to be insufficient for Francophones) - Interview on the situation of long-term care beds for Francophones in the North - October 15, 2021

[Jusqu'à 3 ans pour mettre en place l'offre active des services en français en Ontario](#) (Up to three years to implement the active offer of French language service in Ontario) - Tabling of the French Language Services bill and the inclusion of the active offer - November 5, 2021

[Loi sur les services en français : qu'est-ce que l'offre active](#) (French Language Services Act: what is the active offer?) - Radio interview with the Executive Director relating to making the active offer mandatory) - November 21, 2021

[De la stabilité pour les services de santé en français](#) (Stability for French language services) - Radio interview with the Executive Director relating to renewing the Entities) - December 8, 2021

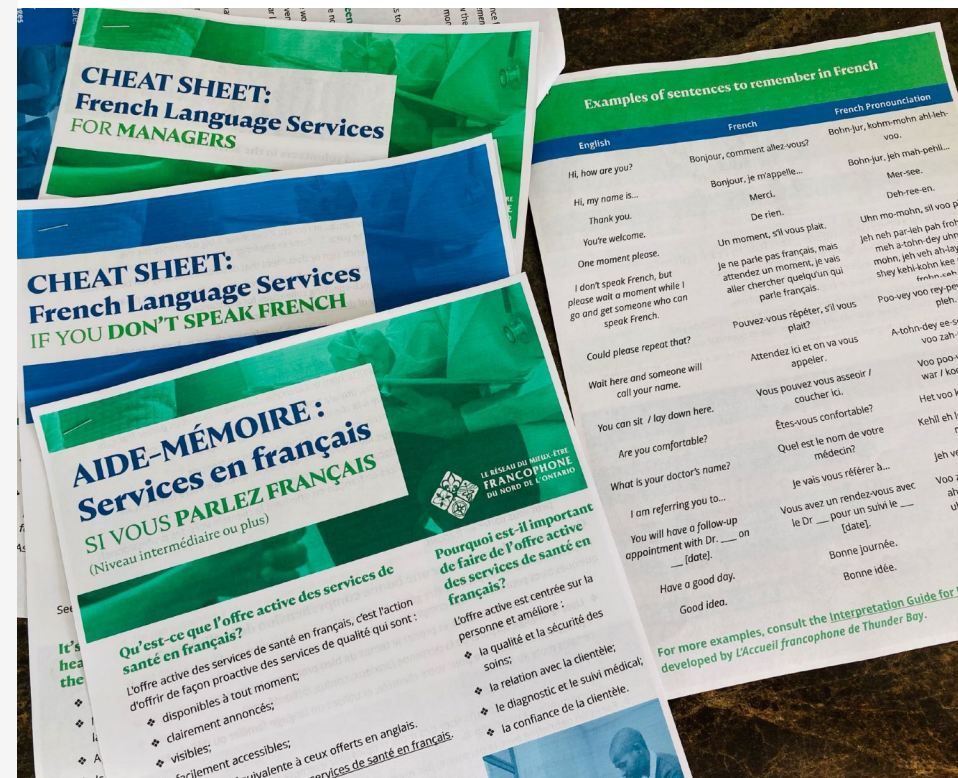
[Que le patient soit servi dans sa langue](#) (For the patient to be served in their language) - Interview with the Executive Director relating to the results of the study on the improvement of the Francophone experience in healthcare - December 15, 2021

[Un système plus rapide, sauf en santé](#) (A more rapid system, except in health) - Interview with the Executive Director relating to the new designation tool - March 3, 2022

The Réseau sent out **16 Bulletins INFO Newsletter** to its **1000 subscribers** in the region and throughout the province.

Tools and Resources

The tools and resources created by the Réseau, or its partners are now available in the dedicated section of the Réseau's website. Interesting resources developed this year are the Fact Sheets [Cheat Sheet: French Language Services](#), which aim to equip managers and healthcare personnel to better serve their Francophone clients.



Results 2021-2022

April 1st, 2021 to March 31, 2022



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Updates to Respond to the Needs

Thanks to additional project funding from the Société Santé en français, it was possible to undertake important updates to the training modules in order to meet the needs of our partners:

- ❖ Addition of a shorter (3 hour) training option
- ❖ Development of complementary modules in long term care, immigration, mental health and addictions as well as primary care
- ❖ Integration of a pre and post training evaluation component to verify active offer behaviours of participants

Individuals Trained
in Active Offer in
2021-2022
399

Utilisateurs depuis le lancement

Individuals
Registered
3553

Certificates Issued
2269 - 64 %

French
13 %

Language
in Which the
Training was
Taken

English
87 %

Group Registration for Organisations

Organisations have group accounts and many encourage or require their employees to complete the 3-hour or the 5-hour training.

Group
Accounts
50

Individuals
Registered in
Groups
1934

Pan-Canadian Adaptation

The active offer training is available in versions adapted for Saskatchewan, Yukon, the Northwest Territories, and Newfoundland and Labrador. There is also a generic training option for the other regions in Canada.

Accreditations

Canadian College of Health Leaders

College of Family Physicians of Canada

Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada

An Essential Training

The Réseau had the opportunity to present the active offer training at the national level as part of a webinar series with the *Société Santé en français* to 42 participants and with RISE for Ontario Health Teams (as previously mentioned in the *Planning* section). Enthusiasm for the training is still strong.



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

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The Healthy Early years project was made possible through a financial contribution of Public Health Agency of Canada.

The Francophone Immigration Health project is funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.

The Réseau du mieux-être francophone du Nord de l'Ontario (Réseau) receives financial support from Ontario Health North and the government of Ontario.

The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of Health Canada, Public Health Agency of Canada, the Société Santé en français, the LHINs, Ontario Health or the government of Ontario.

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