

Let's Make Healthy
Change Happen.



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



3/19/2025

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

The Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids) is committed to improving care and delivering what every patient and family deserves. Among the key elements of success are:

- Timely feedback from the community we serve to fuel improved patient and family experiences
- Reducing hospital-acquired conditions (HACs) and serious safety events (SSEs) to increase patient safety and eliminate preventable harm
- Timely access to surgical services for children, youth, and families to improve short- and long-term health outcomes

Knowing that positive health-care experiences lead to positive health outcomes, we've focused our efforts on the fundamentals that are most important to patients and families through the development of our first-ever Patient and Family Experience (PFX) Strategy, enabling us to reimagine our services to ensure a more human-centred experience. The PFX Strategy will elevate patient and family experience from the boardroom to the bedside and re-focus our efforts on the fundamentals that are most important.

The Caring Safely program has accelerated our progress toward eliminating preventable harm by setting ambitious targets, leveraging transparency and comparative data, and introducing principles and practices from ultra-safe industries outside of health care, known as high-reliability organizations. A suite of education sessions and programs have been created to build and reinforce expected safety behaviours and to provide knowledge and tools.

New and innovative approaches to reduce wait times for surgical procedures and specialist appointments are paying off for patients and families and SickKids. Co-led by SickKids and Ontario Health Toronto Region, and supported by community hospital partners across the Greater Toronto Area, the Surgical and Endoscopy Community Partnerships Program was established as a successful system-wide approach to reducing wait times and ensuring timely access to high-quality paediatric care.

Access and Flow

To address Ontario's significant growth in the waitlists for both paediatric surgery and paediatric endoscopy, SickKids is taking a "system approach" to reduce wait times and facilitate timely access to high-quality paediatric surgical care for patients and families. Today the waitlist has been reduced to about 5,700 patients thanks in part to the success of an innovative partnership program.

The Surgical and Endoscopy Community Partnerships Program was developed and implemented in early 2023, forming new strategic partnerships with six Toronto-area community hospitals to decentralize paediatric surgical care by transferring long-waiting patients from the SickKids waitlist for surgical care in the community. Each of the partner hospitals have pre-existing paediatric surgical programs and the capacity to support the referred patients.

The program, which was designated a Leading Practice by Health Standards Organization for its innovative, people-centred, and evidence-informed approach, has transitioned more than 1,000 paediatric cases to partner hospitals for surgical case completion, supporting a reduction to the surgical waitlist by approximately 10 per cent. We are targeting an additional 10 per cent reduction to the waitlist this year as the early program success has fostered an innovative, family-centred and integrated system-wide approach to the provision of timely access to paediatric surgical care.

Separately, SickKids' Connected Care program caters to the unique care needs of children with medical complexity and technology dependence. Located at SickKids, Connected Care offers a range of services and partners across the continuum of care to coordinate, improve health and safety, spread standards of paediatric practice and deliver greater value across the health system. As a key element of SickKids' strategy to create a seamless child and family experience, Connected Care builds capacity to increase access to specialized nursing and interprofessional services and supports, and improves safety in transitions to home and community for 2,000 children annually.

The program is a critical component of our integration strategy, helping to optimize system alignment, improve care co-ordination, and strengthen the seamless delivery of clinical care for patients and families following discharge. With Connected Care Live, patients, caregivers and homecare providers are never alone, receiving round-the-clock access to a SickKids nurse for consultation services and self-directed resources at no charge. The success of Connected Care was recognized at the inaugural Ontario Health System Quality and Innovation Awards, taking the top prize in the Improved Patient Experience Award category.



Equity and Indigenous Health

SickKids is committed to embedding equity in every aspect of care, research and education. Guided by Ontario Health's Equity, Inclusion, Diversity and Anti-Racism Framework and the First Nations, Inuit, Métis, and Urban Indigenous Health Framework, we work to reduce systemic barriers and improve health outcomes.

To build organizational capacity, we launched three EDI training modules – Health Equity, Gender Diversity and Anti-Black Racism – as part of the 2024 Quality Improvement Plan. Exceeding our 60 per cent completion target for people leaders, we now aim for 85 per cent by 2026.

SickKids also advanced its Health Equity Data Initiative (HEDI), which is about ensuring all patients receive care that reflects their unique identities, circumstances, and needs. With more than 10,000 Emergency Department patients completing the survey and all ambulatory areas now live with HEDI, patient care is improving in several ways. These include adding preferred pronouns to wristbands, staff addressing language needs, and extending support to families who may otherwise struggle to access resources.

In 2024, the EDI Central Office completed an environmental scan of Indigenous health strategies to better understand the Indigenous health landscape and begin discussions for developing our Indigenous health strategic work. This informed the creation of a Core Indigenous Working Group, ensuring meaningful Indigenous engagement. We also welcomed our first Elder-in-Residence, Grandmother Vivian Recollet to support this work.

Externally, SickKids joined the Indigenous Health Action Network (IHAN) and the Thriving Minds collaborative with CAMH to improve access to culturally safe and coordinated mental health services. Cultural safety training remains a priority, with 260 staff completing San'yas Indigenous Cultural Safety Training and 28 participating in the KAIROS Blanket Exercise to deepen understanding of colonization's impact.

We also recognize key Indigenous Days of Significance, fostering education and engagement. By tracking progress, we remain committed to eliminating disparities, fostering cultural safety and delivering equitable, high-quality care.



Patient/Client/Resident Experience

In April 2024, SickKids launched a new Patient and Family Experience Strategy, which serves as the blueprint to re-imagine and re-energize our services and to ensure a more human-centred experience to care, research and education. The creation of this strategy followed many months of collaborative work with patients, families, staff and the community. No matter where they are in their specific paediatric health-care journeys, patients and families shared that a fundamental need and expectation for their health-care experience is to first be recognized as the unique children, youth and families they are.

Over the course of this work, patients and families generously shared their stories about the challenges, opportunities and memorable interactions that have impacted their experiences at SickKids. We heard that compassionate communication, active listening, making decisions together, comfortable spaces, and commitment to continuous improvement are building blocks without which excellent clinical care, research and education cannot be fully achieved. We also heard that each member of our team, and every action we take, directly or indirectly shapes the experiences of the patients and families we serve, now, and into the future.

Collaboration will also play an integral role in the implementation of this strategy. SickKids recognizes the immense value of partnering with patients and families and is committed to being an authentic partner in everything we do. To ensure continued progress, SickKids will establish an experience improvement loop. In addition to newly developed digital surveying, for which we have full year of data that is used to guide improvement priorities, we will use focus groups, interviews, safety reporting systems, and co-design sessions to capture the diverse voices of our community. Using a consistent framework to analyze and prioritize opportunities, we will improve the organization's ability to translate needs into action, continuously improving experiences over time.



Provider Experience

At SickKids, we can't take care of the community we serve without also taking care of the physical and mental health of our staff. That's why we're working to model well-being behaviours in our leadership, culture, and daily activities, and create environments where teams and individuals are safe and thrive.

Keeping staff healthy and safe is a priority for SickKids, as evidenced through multiple programs, including the Prevention of Workplace Violence Program. Reducing workplace violence is a key indicator in our quality improvement plan, supported by our Prevention of Workplace Violence Steering Committee, Code White Review Committee and ongoing patient escalation work. SickKids was also the first hospital in Canada to offer a Peer Support and Trauma Response program, which has been continually expanded since its launch in 2018.

SickKids also held its inaugural Schwartz Rounds. The sessions, which are held at hospitals around the world, are an opportunity for all staff – both clinical and non-clinical – to reflect on their experiences, share insights, and support one another in navigating the challenges and joys of working in health care.

For the 10th year in a row, SickKids was proud to be named to Canada's Top 100 Employers. The editors pointed to SickKids' focus on health and well-being as reasons for their decision. For instance, they noted the healthy food options made in-house daily at the Terrace Café food court. They also highlighted the relocated staff Wellness Centre, which offers a complete range of fitness equipment, studio, shower facilities and day use lockers, and was recently made available for free to all staff. Moreover, SickKids was also named one of Canada's Top Employers for Young People.

We have always believed in a "you asked, we listened" approach. Our latest employee engagement survey received a strong response rate of 63 per cent and showed confidence that staff feedback will lead to meaningful action. Another mechanism of receiving staff feedback is through executive rounding. For instance, our CEO took part in nearly 40 meetings with staff last year to take questions and listen to what is on their minds. In the coming year, the senior management team is committed to continue to address and create positive changes on such priority items as employee recognition, workload balance and communication.

The efforts to improve the employee experience are part of a broader recruitment and retention initiative, which includes a Nursing Workforce Optimization strategy. In its fourth year and led by the Chief Nursing Officer and nursing leadership, this strategy remains focused on strengthening the workforce pipeline, diversifying retention strategies, and recognizing the incredible work and expertise of the nursing workforce. We are also making a concerted effort to celebrate nursing staff across the hospital in internal and social channels to show how rewarding “our kind of nursing” can be at SickKids. To help new nurses during their critical first year, our nursing orientation program includes special mental health and well-being education sessions to help them better understand the demands of the job and how to get support to enjoy a long and rewarding career at SickKids.



Safety

In 2015, SickKids launched our patient and staff safety program – Caring Safely – with the underlying goal to eliminate preventable harm. The work of Caring Safely is guided by SickKids’ membership in the Solutions for Patient Safety (SPS) network, which includes more than 140 paediatric hospitals (including eight in Canada) working together to ensure all patients and staff are safe.

Our current focus is on reducing the following: potentially preventable hospital-acquired conditions; serious safety events; and reported incidents of workplace violence. At the heart of Caring Safely is creating and supporting a strong culture of safety. At SickKids, we are strengthening our safety culture through the following activities:

Education programs

Staff training is key to supporting a strong safety culture. All new hires are required to take the “Error Prevention” class, where they learn about the organization’s expected safety behaviours and associated error prevention tools. For staff who have been with SickKids for more than a year, we offer a “Refresh Your Knowledge” safety course. For leaders, we offer two courses, “Leadership Methods” and “Fair and Just Culture,” both of which were recently revamped and updated.

Sharing success and learning

Part of having a strong safety culture is a commitment to learning and continuous improvement. We learn from safety situations using formal methods such as Root Cause Analysis or simply asking staff what worked well and what didn’t work well. We share these findings by telling safety stories, which allow staff to reflect on their practice and incorporate improvement recommendations into their work. SickKids also values celebrating safety successes and milestones organization wide. In acknowledging excellence demonstrated by our staff, we reinforce best practices in safety.

Good Catch program

Individuals or teams whose use of one (or more) of the expected safety behaviours to prevent harm to patients or staff are eligible to receive Good Catch awards. Each month, a committee meets to review nominations and select a few staff for recognition. Winners receive a pin and a certificate and are celebrated by their local teams.

Safety Coach program

Safety Coaches observe practice habits and provide instant feedback and constant reinforcement to peers in their unit or department. The goal of the program is to reduce staff and patient harm through the development of a strong safety culture driven by colleagues, not theory.

Going forward, we are focusing on collaboration, psychological safety, trust and respect, and integrating proactive safety tools, as these are critical elements in ensuring teams work well in high-risk situations.



Palliative Care

SickKids is proud to deliver high-quality palliative care to patients and their families through a wide variety of activities that fully meet Ontario Health's highest quality standards. When patients face a life-limiting illness, health teams refer families to our Paediatric Advanced Care Team (PACT) for an additional layer of support.

The PACT team is focused on helping children with serious illness live better and ensuring families have no regrets. Through early identification, assessment and integration, SickKids creates individualized care plans for each patient. The team works closely with caregivers, who most often act as substitute decision-makers, to ensure each child receives a unique care plan tailored to their specific needs, beliefs and preferences. It's not about choosing between hope and comfort – SickKids believes in making both possible by encouraging a balance between prolonging a child's life alongside positive activities (e.g., music, massage and clown therapies) and memory making.

The management of pain and psychosocial support is another aspect of SickKids' palliative care. The interprofessional PACT team, which includes physicians, nurse practitioners, grief support coordinators, and child life specialists, works diligently to relieve pain and address mental, emotional, cultural, and spiritual needs.

SickKids' high-quality palliative care is not only available to those living near SickKids, but across Ontario through a robust community-based model. Through our partnership with Emily's House hospice, SickKids' patients and families can receive expert services like respite, symptom management, transitional care and end-of-life care in a warm home-like environment. We also partner with local health-care providers to ensure that the needs of children requiring palliative care are met in the best setting for them. PACT team members will personally oversee transitions from hospital to home and help train local providers who lack experience in paediatrics. This system was developed by SickKids and is soon to become the model of care for the entire province.



Population Health Management

In support of population health management and reducing the incidence of respiratory viruses and vaccine-preventable diseases, SickKids leveraged its expertise to relaunch the Immunization InfoLine (formerly Vaccine Consult Service) after a successful pilot program the previous year. The SickKids Immunization InfoLine offers families from anywhere in Ontario comprehensive information from a trusted healthcare professional about all immunizations offered during pregnancy and childhood. Through a free scheduled phone appointment with a specially trained nurse, families have the opportunity to have an open, one-on-one conversation and ask questions about immunizations in a secure and non-judgmental environment.

In a further sign of our commitment to improve access to mental health services and integration across the system, SickKids was designated a Schedule 1 psychiatric facility. That means SickKids can admit and treat patients held under the Mental Health Act to our integrated inpatient mental health unit, eliminating the requirement to transfer them outside SickKids when a patient requires involuntary care. In addition, SickKids, CAMH and The Garry Hurvitz Centre for Community Mental Health at SickKids signed a new memorandum of understanding to align services to ensure that child, youth, and family experiences and outcomes are at the center of our care systems and can seamlessly experience the child and youth mental health system across all of the involved organizations.

Lastly, the Virtual Urgent Care (VUC) program enables access to real-time guidance for urgent health concerns from any mobile device or computer. While our VUC platform has been accessed by patients and families more than 57,000 times, with more than 14,000 virtual visits completed with SickKids ED physicians since launching in 2021, a recent data analysis showed that usage is skewed to certain neighbourhoods. To increase access to a broader population, SickKids launched an in-person, greeter-assisted kiosk at a mall located in one of Toronto's most digitally underserved communities. At the kiosk, families can:

- Use a symptom-checker for health guidance and, if necessary, be directed to their nearest emergency department for in-person care
- Engage in virtual care visits with SickKids ED clinicians when eligible

Furthermore, patients and families accessing the kiosk will have access to interpreter services to facilitate real-time communication with health-care providers in more than 230 languages.



Have questions about immunizations for children?

Visit www.sickkids.ca/immunizationinfo to book an appointment with a trained nurse to talk about any questions or concerns specific to your child.



Immunization
InfoLine

SickKids

Emergency Department Return Visit Quality Program (EDRVQP)

With more than 65,000 visits to our Emergency Department last year, SickKids is considered a large-volume site. As a participant in the Emergency Department Return Visit Quality Program (EDRVQP), we have implemented several quality improvement projects that are making a positive difference for patients and families, and the health system.

For instance, when a patient and their health-care provider speak the same language, it's called language-concordant care. Facilitating care in a patient's preferred language has been a quality improvement priority for SickKids' Emergency Department because it's been shown to improve patient outcomes, access to health information, and patient trust.

With the creation of a special smart phrase embedded into the clinical note of the electronic health record (Epic), the documentation of whether or not an interpreter was used in non-English speaking charts has seen a sustained increase to more than 80 per cent from less than 20 per cent. Most recently, we introduced a new icon on the tracking board that clearly identifies a patient with a non-English language preference. One of the process measures from this project – rate of interpreter use for patients with non-English language preference – is now an equity quality indicator on the hospital's scorecard (current rate is about 22 per cent).

The following are examples of ongoing quality improvement initiatives in the ED:

- Optimization of handover from paramedics to the ED trauma team by increased use of a tool that helps improve the quality of information communicated, reduce frequency of interruptions, and decrease handover time.
- Standardization of trauma documentation through the development and implementation of an electronic Trauma Narrator, which is known to improve integrity of patient records, reduce errors, increase medication safety and workflow efficiency.

- New multidisciplinary pathway to expedite care and improve neurological outcome for trauma patients presenting to the ED with isolated traumatic brain injury.
- Management of agitation in paediatric ED patients with autism.
- Improving care for mental health patients who present to the ED in crisis.
- New measles pathway and introduction of Epic banners to promote early isolation and notification of key teams (Microbiology, IPAC, Public Health).



Executive Compensation

Performance based compensation accounts for an additional 25% of the President and Chief Executive Officer's (CEO) annual base salary, 19% for the Executive Vice President (EVP) and 15% for Vice Presidents (VP)/Chiefs. 40% of the performance-based compensation is directly linked to achieving 100% of the selected QIP target in addition to financial and other operating targets of the institution. If the organization achieves 100% of the selected QIP target set out above, in addition to achieving the financial and operational targets, the percentages listed below are multiplied by each executive's base salary to determine the value of the performance-based compensation tied to the achievement of the QIP.

The following executive roles participate in the Executive Performance Incentive Program. Incentives are awarded based on the degree of achievement of the above performance targets:

- President and CEO 10%
- Executive Vice President 7.6%
- VP, Finance and CFO 6%
- VP and CIO 6%
- VP, Human Resources 6%
- Chief Medical Officer, and VP, Medical and Academic Affairs 6%
- VP, Clinical 6%
- VP, Clinical, and Chief, Professional Practice and Nursing 6%
- VP and Chief Legal and Risk Officer 6%
- VP, Planning, Development, and Transformation 6%

Contact Information/Designated Lead

The Hospital for Sick Children
555 University Ave, Toronto, ON M5G 1X8


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



Kathleen Taylor, Board Chair

Signed by:

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Clara Angotti, Board Quality Committee Chair



Dr. Ronald Cohn, President, and Chief Executive Officer