

Active offer

OF FRENCH-LANGUAGE HEALTH SERVICES

for Francophone and Acadian minority
communities in Canada



Joint Position Statement

Société Santé en français and the French-Language Health Networks of Canada

Background

The *Société Santé en français* is a pan-Canadian umbrella organization that supports the work of 16 provincial, territorial and regional networks tasked with rallying the partners in their areas for the planning and organization of French-language health services for Canada's Francophone and Acadian minority communities.

The collective mission of the *Société Santé en français* and French-Language Health Networks is to ensure better access to quality French-language programs and services in order to improve the health of all Francophone and Acadian minority communities. Many studies indicate that the language of communication between a professional providing a health-care service and the person receiving the service is a significant factor in the quality, efficiency and safety of the service.¹ The minority language situation is a determinant of health.²

One of the four major priorities for the *Société Santé en français* and French-Language Health Networks is the organization and adaptation of services to ensure better accessibility. Our goal is to improve the offer of health services in French by integrating Francophone needs into the development of high-quality French-language services along the entire health service continuum. We aim to achieve this by increasing the availability and offer of services directed towards all manner of individuals and by making the offer active.



The communities served by our member networks are diverse in nature and require customized solutions. However, an active offer is still expected to be the best solution for ensuring access to services, whatever these are, taking into account the needs and realities specific to each environment.

After examining the foundations and forms of active offer in the varied context of French-language health services in Canada's minority communities, we have come to a common understanding of active offer, which we set forth in this document.

This document establishes the relevance of active offer, expresses our understanding of active offer as it relates to the needs of Francophone and Acadian minority communities, identifies our partners' roles and responsibilities in its implementation and emphasizes our commitment to working with our partners to institute active offer.³ The commitment of our partners is key to ensuring that the active offer of French-language health services becomes a reality in Canada's Francophone and Acadian minority communities. Active offer will ultimately lead to improved access to French-language health services in minority settings.

¹ From the *Société Santé en français* (2013). *Destination Health 2018: Quality, Safety and Wellness in French*. Page 4. Let us cite, for example, the study of Bowen, S. (2001). *Language Barriers in Access to Health Care*. Ottawa: Health Canada.

² Bouchard, L., and Desmeules, M. (2013). Les minorités linguistiques du Canada et la santé [Canada's language minorities and health]. *Healthcare Policy*. Volume 9, special. edition. Pages 38-47.

³ The text of this statement has largely been drawn from the following source: *French Language Health Planning Entities and French Language Health Networks of Ontario* (March 2015). *Joint Position Statement on the Active Offer of French Language Health Services in Ontario*.

Active offer⁴

Active offer of French-language health services is the regular and permanent offer of services to Francophones and Acadians in minority communities. The active offer of services:

- respects the principle of equity;
- aims for service quality comparable to that provided in English;
- is linguistically and culturally appropriate to the needs and priorities of Francophone and Acadian communities, and builds on a holistic approach of person-centred services;
- is inherent in the quality of services provided to people and an important contributing factor to their safety.

It is the result of a rigorous and innovative process for planning and delivering services in French that advocates a variety of strategies such as raising awareness and providing tools and support.

It relies on shared accountability at several levels and requires partners to exercise appropriate leadership with respect to health services in French.

In concrete terms, it takes the form of a range of health services available in French and offered proactively, which means that services are clearly advertised, visible and easily accessible at all times without placing the responsibility of requesting services on the clients.



⁴ The *Mouvement Santé en français* [Movement for French-language health services] has adopted the definition put forward by the French Language Health Planning Entities and French Language Health Networks of Ontario (March 2015). *Joint Position Statement on the Active Offer of French Language Health Services in Ontario*.

Our partners in implementing active offer

We have identified five partners that are key to improving access to French-language health services: policy makers, health-care administrators, health professionals, educational institutions and communities.

Active offer requires that each partner commit, assume responsibility and cooperate. The following paragraphs set out the roles and responsibilities of each partner.

Policy makers

The policy, legal and regulatory framework of access to French-language health services varies from one province or territory to another. The specificities of each province or territory must be taken into account. All levels of government enact laws, policies, regulations and plans to ensure access to health services in French. Their responsibilities include making available the expertise, resources and accountability mechanisms required by the system organizations with respect to active offer or health services in French.⁵

Administrators

Administrators of clinical, public and community services are responsible and accountable for quality, person-centred services. Administrators play a leadership role by opening the governance of their organizations to the Francophone and Acadian community, by stating their policy on active offer, and by publicizing this commitment. Administrators plan and coordinate their actions accordingly. They build an internal culture that supports active offer and hire professionally and linguistically competent staff. Lastly, administrators continuously assess and improve their capacity to provide quality health services in French.

Professionals

Health professionals working in clinical, public and community sectors use their professional, linguistic and cultural competencies as well as their ethical judgement to proactively welcome their Francophone and Acadian clients in French, understand their needs, and provide them with the necessary care or refer them to the resources able to provide such care. Health professionals also take on a leadership role in their environment by promoting active offer. In this way they ensure quality of care for, and the safety of, the people served.

Educational institutions

Educational Institutions equip future French-speaking executives and professionals for active offer of quality health services in French.⁶

Communities

Francophone and Acadian communities actively use French language health services to express their needs and obtain appropriate care. As language is a determinant of health, communities also contribute to the improvement of health services by communicating their viewpoint on the quality of care they receive, by expressing emerging needs or, when possible, by participating in the planning and governance of the organizations responsible for health services.

⁵ Inspired in part by Gauthier, H., and M.-A. Reid Triantafyllos. (2012). *Linguistic Competence and Quality of Services* prepared for *Santé en français* (Manitoba).

⁶ Lortie, L., Lalonde, A., & P. Bouchard, (January 2012). *Cadre de référence pour la formation à l'offre active des services de santé en français* [reference framework for the training for active offer of French-language health services]. Prepared for the *Consortium national de formation en santé* [national health education consortium].

Our commitment

We work jointly with our partners to ensure the active offer of health services in French; these efforts require their commitment, cooperation and an appropriation of responsibility.

The *Joint Position Statement on Active Offer* is evidence of our commitment to our partners to work with them in planning and developing this active offer.



FRENCH-LANGUAGE HEALTH NETWORKS OF CANADA

