

French-language Services Plan

2022–2023

Health and Wellness

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French-language Services Plan
Department of Health and Wellness
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Ce document est également disponible en français sous le titre : « Plan de services en français 2022-2023 »

Message from the Deputy Minister

Bonjour!

The Department of Health and Wellness (DHW or the Department) strives to meet the healthcare needs and priorities of the Acadian and Francophone communities in Nova Scotia. As we face the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, Nova Scotia has quickly adapted to a new way of living, including new ways of receiving and delivering healthcare services in our province.

We remain committed to providing various French-language services to our clients as a Department. The delivery of health services in the province is a collaboration between the DHW, Nova Scotia Health (NSH), the IWK, and other delivery partners. In the year ahead, we will continue to learn from how the pandemic has impacted our Acadian and Francophone communities and create opportunities to help shape healthcare delivery as we move into living with COVID-19.

The Department will work closely with Réseau Santé - Nouvelle-Écosse (RSNÉ), as well as the French-Language Services Coordinators (FLSCs) at the NSH and the IWK, to gather input from the Acadian and francophone communities to understand their health needs and issues better. We look forward to continuing our work with our partners to improve service delivery for our French-speaking Nova Scotians.

Jeannine Lagassé, Deputy Minister, Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness

What we are doing to contribute to the growth of the Acadian and francophone community

This plan outlines the DHW's efforts to promote health services in French and relate health services to the needs of the Acadian and francophone communities.

DHW engages the Acadian and francophone communities in its priority initiatives. FLSCs from DHW, NSH, and the IWK work collaboratively to share information supporting French-language services throughout the health sector. The roles and responsibilities of DHW and the health authorities are defined in the *Health Authorities Act*.

The FLSCs of DHW, NSHA, and IWK are non-voting members of the board of directors of RSNÉ, a non-profit organization that brings together key stakeholders from the healthcare sector and the francophone community to improve access to health services in French in Nova Scotia.

French-language services coordinator:

DHW's FLSC is Jennifer Saulnier, who can be reached at Jennifer.Saulnier@novascotia.ca

Ongoing services we offer in French

- 811 services are available in French through French-speaking nurses and on-demand third-party translation services. The 811 website also includes health fact sheets in French.
- The website for the Gambling Support Network includes links for a helpline, texts, and chat in English, French and other languages: <https://gamblingsupportnetwork.ca/?lang=fr>
- Acadians and francophones in Nova Scotia can access a comprehensive description of insured health services in the province in their language through the annual report of the *Canada Health Act*. Like other jurisdictions, Nova Scotia provides information to Health Canada for the annual report, and this information is available online in both French and English.

How we communicate with the public in French

DHW has a French Written Correspondence and Verbal Communication Policy, revised in July 2018. DHW's correspondence team, program areas, and FLSC work together to ensure that correspondence received in French is responded to in French, as the policy requires.

During COVID-19, DHW continued to meet its responsibilities under the *French-language Services Act*, providing French-related information related to public safety, public health or impacts on French-language populations.

What we did to maintain or improve our French-language services in 2021–22

The following describes key accomplishments against actions identified in the 2021-2022 French-language services plan:

- **Support compliance with the *French-language Services Act* and Regulations**
 - In 2021-22, DHW published a French-language services plan that identified key areas of focus in enhancing French-language services in the province.
 - DHW's FLSC participated in the French-language Services Coordinating Committee under Nova Scotia's Office of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie (OAAF).
 - Throughout our response to COVID-19, DHW expanded the number and types of platforms through which it relayed public health information in French in a timely manner. For instance, information about key items, such as measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19, was made available in French on Nova Scotia's COVID-19 website and updated as needed.
 - Similarly, several requests for compassionate or other exemptions for travel during COVID-19 were received in French and responded to in French.
 - In partnership with our COVID-19 Exceptions Team, we worked with Communications Nova Scotia (CNS) to officially translate documents into French, including Border Approval Letters, Border Entry Letters and Border Application Letters.
 - We also updated our internal letterheads and signature lines to ensure our correspondence returned in French had the corresponding French language salutations and information attached.

- **Raise awareness of French-language services at all levels**
 - A French-language services site is available on our DHW Intranet (internal to the government) and continues to be updated.
 - French-language training was expanded in the following ways:
 - French courses were promoted within DHW through various channels, such as e-mails and announcements on our Intranet.
 - Staff participated in both Université Sainte-Anne programs and our internal awareness course, Acadie at a Glance, provided through the Public Service Commission.

- **Support French-language services in the province by actions related to DHW's core activities**
 - Every English news release issued about COVID-19 was also available in French, as is the entirety of the province's COVID-19 website and other supporting materials.
 - DHW's FLSC collaborated with program areas concerning MSI services to ensure communication to clients was available in French.
 - The Equity and Engagement Division was created in 2021 to ensure community voices, strategic partnerships and lived experiences continue to inform and shape our vision and mission. The FLSC now belongs to this division.

- **Enhance materials available to French-speaking Nova Scotians in print and online**
 - DHW translated the website for the Midwifery Council of Nova Scotia. The mandate and legislated duty of the Council is to serve and protect the public interest by regulating midwifery practice.

- **Support the community in its development through consultations, collaboration, and partnerships**
 - Recognizing the growing need for collaboration to support the community, the FLSC and Director of Equity and Engagement met with RSNÉ to discuss collaborative opportunities moving forward.
 - DHW's FLSC continued to work collaboratively with the NSHA and IWK FLSCs to share information supporting French-language services throughout the health sector and respond to inquiries related to DHW from their Bonjour intake service.
 - The Equity and Engagement Division created an Equity Strategy that identified external and community outreach with French-speaking communities as priorities for 2022-2023.

- **Maintain and nurture a dialogue with the community and gain input, feedback, and recommendations**
 - The DHW FLSC continued to be an *ex officio* member of the board of RSNÉ, meeting with its staff and with other board members and attending quarterly board meetings. During COVID-19, these activities were moved online.
 - In November 2021, *as part of the Speak up for Healthcare Tour*, the RSNÉ was invited to a meeting with our Minister, DM, and Office of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie Minister Colton LeBlanc to present the health issues facing the Acadian and francophone community and discuss the available solutions to allow for reliable, equitable, and safe patient care.

How we plan to maintain or improve our French-language services in 2022–23

The following objectives are from the government's strategic plan for French-language services.

Objective 1: Strengthen internal operational structures, including policy, legislative, and administrative frameworks

- Goal 1.1: Support compliance with the *French-language Services Act* and Regulations
 - Planned measures:
 - DHW will publish a French-language services plan.
 - DHW will continue to participate in the French-language Services Coordinating Committee.
- Goal 1.2: Work with internal teams to support French Language Services delivery, where applicable
 - Planned measure:
 - DHW will continue to work with our partners at Insured Services to maintain and/or enhance the French language options for MSI services when requested.
 - The DHW FLSC will meet with our new offices to ensure coordinated efforts to strengthen our outreach to French-speaking communities.
 - DHW will create a French Language Services Advisory Committee to assist with delivering this plan's objectives and better align our resources with our Equity Strategy.
- Goal 1.3: Use administrative tools to promote French-language services
 - Planned measures:
 - Senior leadership will continue to encourage and promote relevant training, such as French courses or *Acadie at a Glance*.
 - Our main DHW intake telephone line recorded message will be updated in French.
 - Maintain our internal French Languages Services website with the most current guidelines and processes for translation services for DHW staff.

Objective 2: Develop and deliver quality French-language services and programs to the public

- Goal 2.1: Continue to support French-language services in the province by establishing actions related to DHW's core activities
 - Planned measures:
 - The FLSC will work with our two new offices, the Office of Addictions and Mental Health and the Office of Healthcare Professionals Recruitment, to develop key goals around communicating to clients in both official languages.
 - In addition to race-based data collection, the Digital Health, Access and Privacy (DHAP) branch will collect language-based data as part of its surveys.

Objective 3: Maintain ongoing dialogue and engagement with the Acadian and francophone community

- Goal 3.1: Increase the availability of relevant health information in French to support the community in its development and support future engagement
 - Planned measures:
 - DHW will continue to collaborate with Nova Scotia regulated health professions to capture data about the language capacity of regulatory bodies' members, possibly through a survey.

- The DHW FLSC will continue to be a conduit for French-language health information and data to the community.
- The DHW FLSC will maintain an open dialogue with community representatives through such actions as participating in meetings of RSNÉ and attending the AGM of Fédération Acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse (FANE).
- The Equity and Engagement Division has created an Equity Strategy that includes external and community strategic priorities. We will be doing external consultations with equity-seeking groups, including Acadian and Francophone communities, to address systemic barriers to healthcare.