

STREAMLINING ACCESS TO CARE BY IMPLEMENTING A REGIONAL CENTRAL INTAKE MODEL

SYSTEM LEVEL IMPROVEMENT THROUGH PATIENT-CENTRED ACCESS TO CARE, STREAMLINED PROCESSES, HIGH-QUALITY CONSISTENT DATA MONITORING

INTRODUCTION

In Waterloo-Wellington, the Regional Coordination Centre (WWRCC) has been offering central intake services, enhancing workflows, and assisting others across the province and country to develop central intake pathways for over 10 years.



The WWRCC central intake model focuses on:

- patient-centred improved access to care
- system navigation
- streamlined processes
- ensuring high-quality data to enable system planning



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SUMMARY

The WWRCC is hosted by Langs CHC and is part of a systemwide coordinated access strategy to improve access to care. A provincial leader in developing central intake services, the WWRCC offers central intake pathways for diabetes, orthopedics, cataracts, and Ontario Seniors Dental Care across Waterloo Region and Wellington County.

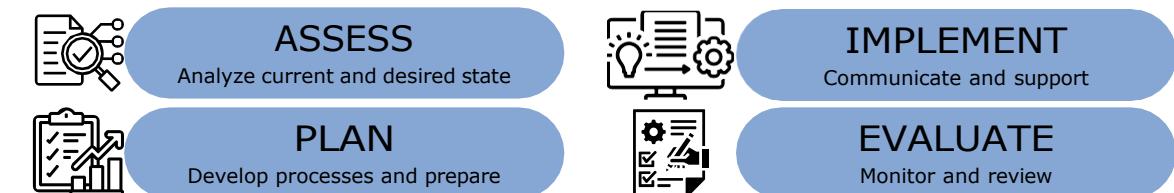
Central intake ensures:

- efficient referral pathways
- referral completeness
- identification of duplicate referrals
- triaging and patient navigation
- even distribution across specialists
- detailed wait-time information
- additional administrative supports

When there is a lack of coordinated intake, referrals are often rejected due to the selected provider's scope of practice or long wait-times, and patients are lost in the system. These experiences led to providers sending duplicate referrals to multiple specialists, inflating wait time calculations, and overall increased administrative burden.

Central intake helps to eliminate these inefficiencies through a single pathway to care.

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE



WWRCC designed a *Framework for the Development and Implementation of a Regional Central Intake* which has been circulated throughout the province and the country to share knowledge with other regions interested in developing a central intake. This guide outlines strategies for developing, scaling, and spreading a central intake model.

EVIDENCE/RESULTS

Program evaluation is ongoing with weekly huddles, allowing for rapid review and implementation cycle when new priorities or indicators emerge. Data collection and validation is foundational to the success of a central intake. Indicators specific to each central intake stream are collected and reported monthly, quarterly, and yearly, and include referral counts, wait-time measurements, referring provider trends, referral recipient needs and socio-demographic data.



PATIENT CARE

Central Intake services offer navigational support and expedited access for patients, consistent screening for eligibility and urgency, and reliable, transparent wait time information and booking practices.

Feedback from patients indicate a consistently positive response to the ease of access to services when they interact with the central intake teams. Diabetes Central Intake specifically allows for improved access to care through a self-referral option, and central intake for dental care for low-income seniors helps clients navigate the application process and provides the support and information they need through phone contact with each applicant.

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"I appreciate you and your team; you are all very diligent at following up and making sure nothing falls through the cracks."

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PROVIDER IMPACT

Existing benefits to providers include:

- decreased burden on administrative staff through single point of contact
- one standardized regional form
- simplified, more timely access to information regarding the status of referrals
- standardized guidance for imaging requirements
- up-to-date awareness of specialties and program requirements
- increased awareness of new specialists in the region

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"I just wanted to... thank you both for your time, wealth of knowledge and perspective... It was extremely helpful to see the process from start to finish and gave (us) a good sense of the things that we need to start working on from a process perspective. You have a very well-run program there and we appreciate you taking the time to share with us!"

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