



Spotlight Award

Cottage Country Family and Algonquin Family Health Teams

Muskoka Community Health Hubs



The community health hubs grew out of a needs assessment conducted by the Algonquin and Cottage Country Family Health Teams in partnership with the District of Muskoka, North Simcoe Muskoka LHIN and Health Links. Given the rural nature of the area and the swelling population of vacationers that summer brings, the assessment identified the need to provide care to unattached rural residents and to provide episodic care for seasonal residents and visitors to Muskoka.

The two teams operated the community health hubs as a demonstration project for three years before receiving permanent funding from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in 2018.

They tested numerous communities, including social housing complexes, before settling on regular sites for the hubs. They currently have three permanent sites and a mobile site (a motorhome exam room) serves three separate communities. Each of the permanent sites offers evening hours at its clinic and episodic care is offered on Saturdays during the summer at two of the sites. Communities served by the hubs sign partnership agreements with the FHTs and are involved in fundraising for the program.

The teams sought community involvement prior to funding to ensure adequate support for fundraising and community awareness existed, and donors have pitched in. Each community formed an advisory committee to work with the Health Hub Operations Committee to develop the service once funding was approved. There were routine community engagement sessions, too. Throughout the demonstration period, staff regularly collected testimonials and surveyed the population to obtain feedback that helped tailor the program to community needs.

The health hubs have been wildly successful, registering 2,336 new patients and counting more than 18,000 visits as of July 1, 2018. They each met or exceeded the deliverables required by the Ministry within the demonstration period and the project was recognized for the Minister's Medal Honour Roll in 2017. Currently, Cottage Country FHT is exploring the possibility of establishing permanent clinics at two of the mobile sites.

Having the clinics function under the FHTs' auspices provides a team approach, ensures compliance with pertinent legislation, provides access to the EMR and shared resources. The clinics partner with other agencies to provide additional care to patients, such as cognitive behavioural therapy, housing and social services supports and counselling.



This new type of partnership between primary care teams, the community and the Ministry, was hailed as the embodiment of “working for the patient.”

Key Facts:

- Hubs collectively registered 2,336 new patients and over 18,000 patient visits, including seasonal residents and visitors, by July 1, 2018
- Community members did project fundraising
- Quarterly dashboards completed for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
- Collaborations with partners allowed for additional care, e.g., cognitive behavioural therapy and housing support
- Model suited to rural, isolated and widespread geographic areas