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| WINNIPEG REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY | Promoting French Language Services – Operational Considerations & Communications framework |

**Promoting French Language Services – Operational Considerations & Communications Framework**

**Introduction**

The WRHA French Language Services Operational Considerations & Communications Framework is a flexible and practical tool used to identify and respond to unintended potential health impacts (positive or negative) of a policy, program, or initiative. This includes assessing the potential impact of decisions on the six priority populations deemed highest need within the Francophone population: children, seniors, immigrants/refugees, those with mental health conditions and addictions and those needing maternal, acute and palliative care.

This guide is a resource for staff of the Winnipeg Health Region to support the effective integration of French Language Service (FLS) considerations in decision-making, policy, and program development – in particular when health equity issues are being addressed. FLS integration should be considered upfront and alongside other equity issues that may surface, including those affecting Francophone populations.

**Context**

The goal is to improve quality of care and optimize the health care system’s general performance. In that respect, the provision of French language health care services has a positive influence on the quality and safety of care, which in turn allows the system to achieve gains in efficiency and efficacy. That is why it is important to focus on developing the provision of French language health care services as the end result, especially in designated regions.

**The Relationship between Language, Health and Quality of Care**

Language barriers have been shown to have an impact on access to health services; the effectiveness of communication between providers and clients; client rights, and quality of care; all of which can negatively affect a client’s health. Language barriers have also been shown to reduce a person’s investment in their own health, impede access to preventive services, lead to poor compliance, lead to diagnostic and treatment errors, increase the number of diagnostic tests, lead to critical incidents, reduce patient satisfaction, and increase costs *(Bowen, 2001; Flores, 2005; Karliner, Jacobs, Chen, & Mutha, 2007)*.

**Active Offer: The Backbone of French Language Services**

A major development of French language rights was the inclusion of active offer in the 1998 revision of the *Official Languages Act*, to ensure that Canadian federal institutions take adequate steps to ensure the public knows of its right to access services in either official language *(Parliament of Canada, 2015)*. This is the same for services provided by the Government of Manitoba, where active offer is defined as: “The set of measures taken by designated public bodies to ensure that French Language Services are evident, readily available, easily accessible, and publicized, and that the quality of these services is comparable to that of services offered in English.”



**Key FLS considerations**

French language considerations should be incorporated upfront at the beginning of a policy, service or program development process, in order for meaningful integration to occur. All WRHA service delivery aspects must consider FLS, with priority to areas where direct services to Francophones are provided. Below are examples of where this framework would apply *(not limited)*:

**“French-language services are just as important as English-language services, and this is especially true for young children, seniors and newcomers.”**

**- Anonymous Patient**

* Quality improvement initiatives;
* Staff education on new policies;
* Purchasing contracts;
* Care maps;
* Clinical protocols;
* Clinical practice guidelines;
* Clinical algorithms;
* Community development;
* Capital planning;
* Restructuring;
* Public consultations;
* Etc.

**Considerations Affecting Francophone Populations**

Listed below are a number of key questions designed to support staff in effective integration of FLS considerations at the onset of a policy or program development process. Please consider these questions when developing a policy, program, or initiative that has the potential to affect the Francophone population.

**1. Getting Started:**

* Have French Language Services best practices and innovative processes been explored and implemented by consulting WRHA French Language Services?
* Does the initiative fall within the parameters of the provincial French-Language Services Policy and the WRHA French Language Services Policies?
* What impact will the policy, service or program have on the delivery of health services and information to Manitoba’s French-speaking population?

**2. Project Planning and Budget**

* Have project timelines incorporated specific activities to meet FLS obligations? (*e.g. time to support translations)*
* Has the project budget incorporated costs related to meeting FLS obligations? *(e.g. print material in a bilingual format, translation)*?

**3. Consultation and Community Engagement**

* Was consultation/collaboration undertaken regarding the policy, service or program’s possible impact on Francophone communities? For example, with:
	+ The French Language Services department of the WRHA?
	+ Key stakeholders and/or the broader Francophone community?

**4. Communications**

* When a policy, service or program is directed to the public, it is strongly encouraged that news releases, announcements and information materials be available to the media and general public in both English and French. Here are some key questions to assist with incorporating these requirements in your project planning:
	+ How will the policy or program be communicated to the French-speaking population?
	+ Have you fully incorporated the *Communications in French Guideline* *(e.g., news releases, public announcements and website posts, etc.)*?
* Have the French-language expectations of the policy, service or program been adequately communicated to employees and volunteers?

**5. Human Resources**

* If the policy, service or program being developed will require offering services or information directly to the public, have the FLS requirements been considered in terms of ensuring:

* + Appropriate staffing resources *(e.g., designated bilingual staff)*?
	+ Training on FLS obligations and the concept of active offer for existing staff?

**6. Contracts**

* Some services may be provided by outside organizations. If applicable, does the contract include agreements to provide the services in French and is the French-language service level defined *(according to the WRHA FLS Policy 10.40.220)*?

**Communications in French Guideline**

The following chart summarizes, for each type of communication, the requirements related to FLS. The chart is organized by format, not content of communication.

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| **FORMAT** | **TYPE** | **STRATEGY** | **DETAILS** |
| Printed | News release | Both official languages | To be released in both official languages simultaneously when possible  |
| Printed | Correspondence | Respond in language of requestor | Within the same turnaround time as the English |
| Printed | Letters and surveys | Bilingual format | To be released in both official languages simultaneously |
| Printed | Stationary | Bilingual format |  |
| Printed | Business Cards/badges | Bilingual format for bilingual employees |  |
| Printed | Display stands | Bilingual format |  |
| Printed | Signage | Bilingual format | Interior and exterior signs must be in both official languages |
| Printed | Forms and official documents | Bilingual format |  |
| Printed | Publications and public reports | Bilingual format or in both languages, with exemptions for technical and scholarly documents; however, provision must be made to assist French‐speaking citizens who wish to review exempted documents. | For online publications that are exempt from translation:If the English version is posted, post a fairly detailed summary in French so that the reader can grasp the content and some of the terminology. |
| Printed | Ad/Marketing campaign | Bilingual format | Distribution / media placement in the Francophone media. The particularities and deadlines of French publications must be taken into account (generally not published daily). |
| Printed | Promotional material | Bilingual format | French version may need to be adapted to be effective in reaching Francophone target audience. |
| Electronic | Intranet | English FormatDocuments in French if available | WRHA working language is English |
| Electronic | Internet | Bilingual format | Publications and updates to be released in both official languages simultaneously |
| Electronic | External links | Links to French version of sitesNEVER post a link to an English site ordocument without a notice such as*Site/document en anglais seulement* | Whenever possible, if a reference site only exists in English:‐ Refer to a similar site in French‐ Add the link to both English and French versions (indicating in the English that the site only exists in French, if that is the case).Ensure external links open in another window, making it clear that the visitor is leaving the WRHA site. |
| Electronic | E-mail from public | Respond in language of requestor | Within the same turnaround time as the English. |
| Electronic | Publications | Bilingual format or in both official languages, with exemptions for technical and scholarly documents with very limited target audiences. | For publications that are exempt:If the English version is posted, post a fairly detailed summary in French so that the reader can grasp the content and some of the terminology. |
| Electronic | Blogs, journals, discussion forums | Both official languagesResponses of the public in either English or French with a notice to that effect. |  |
| Electronic | E-mail signature | Bilingual format for bilingual employees |  |
| Oral | In person | Respond in language of requestor |  |
| Oral | Telephone call | Respond in language of requestor |  |
| Oral | Conference | For major announcements, ensure presence of bilingual staff |  |
| Oral | Speech | Language of the speaker |  |
| Oral | Public Event | Service in both official languages |  |
| Oral | Consultations | Documents in both official languagesBilingual staff or interpretation services. | Organize separate discussion groups or consultations for subjects of particular interest to the Francophone community. When relevant, compile and analyze the views of Francophones separately, because they may have different concerns. |

*If in doubt, WRHA French Language Services can help! Call us at 204-235-3986 or email us at* *flsfeedback-retroactionSLF@sbgh.mb.ca*

**Appendix: FLS References**

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| * Government of Manitoba - [French Language Services Policy](https://www.gov.mb.ca/fls-slf/pdf/fls_policy_en20170908.pdf)
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| * Regional Health Authorities Act (C.C.S.M. c. R34) - [French Language Services Regulation](https://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/regs/current/_pdf-regs.php?reg=46/98) (135/2013)
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| * Regional Health Authorities Act (C.C.S.M. c. R34) - [Bilingual and Francophone Facilities and Programs Designation Regulation](http://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/regs/current/_pdf-regs.php?reg=131/2013) (R.M. 131/2013)
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| * [The Francophone Community Enhancement and Support Act](http://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/_pdf.php?cap=f157) (C.C.S.M. F157)
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| * [The Accessibility for Manitobans Act](https://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/_pdf.php?cap=a1.7) (C.C.S.M. c. A1.7)
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| * Canadian Heritage (Section 16-22) [Official Languages of Canada](https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/o-3.01/fulltext.html)
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| * Government of Manitoba - [Guidelines Manual for the Implementation of French Language Services](https://www.gov.mb.ca/fls-slf/part2_partie2_092017.pdf)
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| * Chartier, Honourable Judge Richard. [Above All, Common Sense](https://www.gov.mb.ca/fls-slf/report/toc.html) – Report and Recommendations on French Language Services within the Government of Manitoba (Commissioned by the Government of Manitoba). May 1998
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| * [Gauthier Report](https://www.gov.mb.ca/fls-slf/pdf/gauthier.pdf) - Study of French-Language Services in Manitoba's Health Care Facilities (1990)
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| * WRHA Policy - [10.40.220 French Language Services: General](http://www.wrha.mb.ca/extranet/fls/files/1040220FLSGeneral2013.doc)
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| * WRHA Policy - [10.40.230 French Language Services: Communications in Official Languages](http://www.wrha.mb.ca/extranet/fls/files/1040230CommOfficialang2013.pdf)
 |
| * WRHA Policy - [10.40.240 French Language Services: Designation of Bilingual Positions](http://www.wrha.mb.ca/extranet/fls/files/1040240FLSDBP.pdf)
 |
| * WRHA Policy - [10.40.250 French Language Services: Recruitment to Designated Bilingual Positions](http://www.wrha.mb.ca/extranet/fls/files/1040250FLSRecruitment.pdf)
 |
| * WRHA Policy - [10.40.260 French Language Services: Translation](http://www.wrha.mb.ca/extranet/fls/files/1040260TransPolicy2015.pdf)
 |
| * WRHA Policy - [10.40. 260 French Language Services: Translation - Appendix one](http://www.wrha.mb.ca/extranet/fls/files/Appendix2015.pdf)
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