

WRHA FRENCH LANGUAGE SERVICES RESEARCH TIDBITS

Issue 2

ACTIVE OFFER OF SERVICES

ACTIVE OFFER?

The active offer of health services in the patient's preferred official language is essential if we want to provide secure, ethical, and good quality health care services to our official language communities. These services must be easily accessible, visible, timely, and of equal quality for both linguistic groups. Everyone, from the decision-makers to health care professionals, must proactively offer services in the patient's preferred official language. A provider's bilingual status can be an added value to the team, which is an important fact to recognize (Lortie, 2012). There is an active offer when an organization demonstrates and communicates in all ways possible to the community and the clients coming to its facility that it has the capacity to offer them quality services in their preferred language (Bouchard et al, 2011). The whole organization must collaborate to promote the active offer.

"Services in French are actively offered when they are proactively offered."

DID YOU KNOW?

A survey of health care professionals (Forgues, Bahi, and Michaud, 2011) revealed that to promote the active offer of services in both languages, the commitment of management is an essential element and a determining factor.

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Teamwork within designated bilingual health and social services facilities is the key to improving the quality, safety and efficiency of health care and social services as part of a successful strategy to actively offer French language services. (Santé en français, 2018)

FACTS & FIGURES

- ▶ As of April 1, 2018, 505 of the 890 (or 57%) of the designated bilingual positions were filled within the Winnipeg Health Region;
- ▶ 2,250 of 15,000 (14%) of WHRA staff have self-declared as speaking both official languages in the 2016 Aon Hewitt Staff Engagement Survey;
- ▶ 40% of Francophones in MB have difficulty receiving health services in the minority language (French);
- ▶ 67% of Francophones in MB find it important to receive health services in French;
- ▶ Access to health services in English was three to seven times higher than access to health services in French throughout the country;

Source: Landry, CIRLM, 2014

DEFINITION: ACTIVE OFFER

*In Manitoba, Active Offer is at the core of the French Language Services Policy adopted by the Government of Manitoba in 1989. It is defined as "all measures taken to ensure that services in French are **evident, readily available, easily accessible, known and of comparable quality to those offered in English.**"*

WHY ACTIVE OFFER?

A review of the international literature shows that language barriers have a significant impact on accessibility of care, patient safety, and quality and outcome of care, and may incur additional costs due to readmission or prolonged hospitalization (Bowen, 2015). The direct provision of services by a bilingual service provider is the preferred method to ensure language concordance. Professional training programs in the minority official language (*Consortium national de formation en santé, 2015*), and opportunities integrated into professional practice to further develop linguistic competencies (*Betancourt et al., 2003*), make it possible for professionals to provide safe and quality services in the service user's official language of choice.

For access to social services and healthcare for minority populations, language and social barriers cannot be ignored. The Francophone minority population's socio-demographic profile shows higher rates of aging, lower average family income, and an overall lower level of education as compared to the majority group (*Bouchard et al., 2009*). The primary objective of the Canada Health Act is "to protect, promote and restore the physical and mental well-being of residents of Canada and to facilitate reasonable access to health services without financial or other barriers" (*Department of Justice, Canada Health Act, S.3*) Accessibility is one of the fundamental principles of the Canadian healthcare system.

ADVANTAGES OF ACTIVE OFFER

Language barriers have significant direct and indirect impacts on patient health care in particular and the health care system in general. The importance of French language services includes to (*phac-aspc.gc.ca*):

- ▶ Foster a better understanding
- ▶ Provide better quality care and services
- ▶ Establish a better relationship between the professional and the patient or client
- ▶ Provide a better quality of life
- ▶ Avoid professional errors
- ▶ Avoid unnecessary service delivery costs.

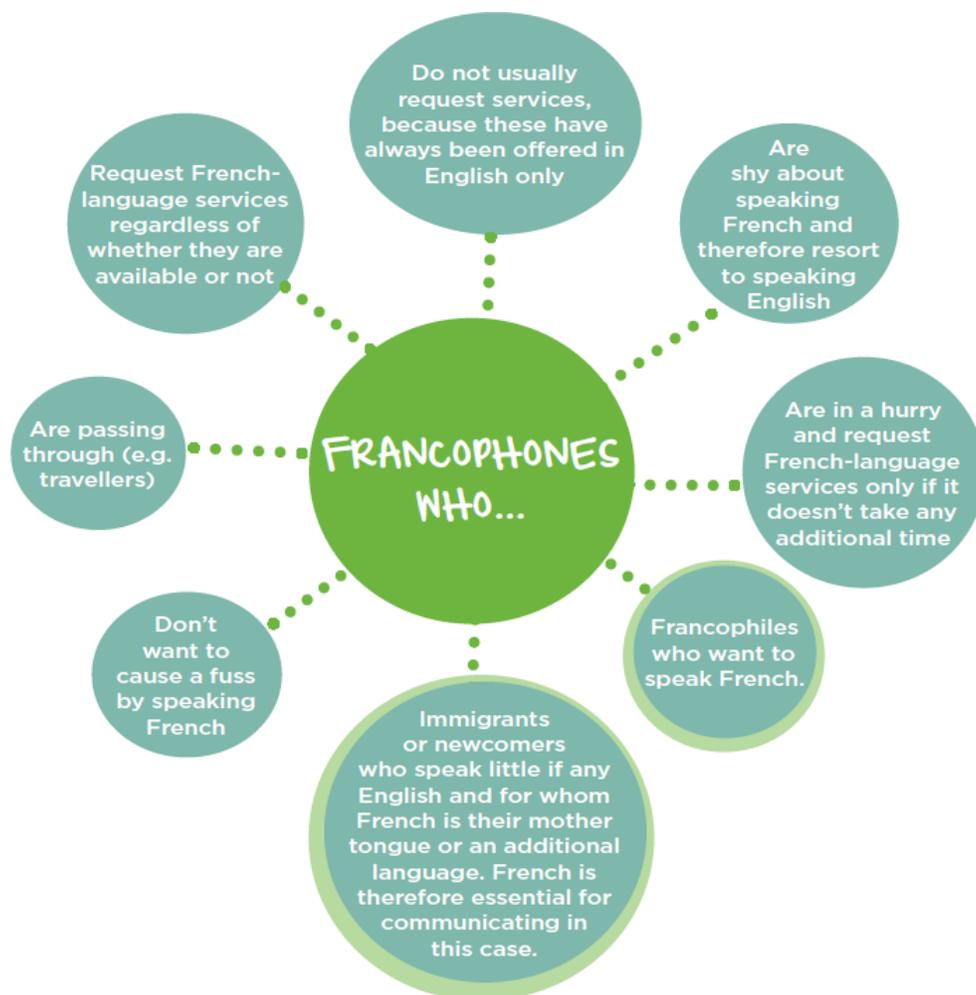
CHALLENGES

Francophones who live in official language minority contexts face specific challenges. They are not necessarily comfortable nor confident enough to ask for services in French (*Forgues & Landry, 2014*) for such reasons as:

1. Linguistic insecurity (*Deveau, Landry, & Allard, 2009*);
2. Fear of not receiving services as quickly (*Drolet et al., 2014*);
3. The conviction that it is impossible to receive these services (*Société santé en français, 2007*);
4. Internalization of the minority identity (*Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1986*), which can lead to two consequences: difficulty asking for or insisting on services in their language, and the belief that services in French may be of inferior quality (*Drolet et al., 2015*);
5. Ease of agreeing to speak English rather than listening to a service provider who has trouble speaking French (*Deveau et al., 2009*); and
6. Lack of French vocabulary for medical issues or health care, which may make the person wonder if it would be harder to understand verbal or written information in French than in English (*Bouchard, Vézina, & Savoie, 2010; Deveau et al., 2009*).



WHO IS ACTIVE OFFER FOR?



Is it possible, by observation only, to determine whether an approaching client wishes to receive or request French language services? Not at all. In fact, the client population who wants to communicate in French in the context of health or social services is very diverse. *Source: Société santé en français, 2016*

2017 FLS CLIENT/PATIENT SATISFACTION SURVEY RESULTS

Did you receive a bilingual welcome? (Active Offer) 165 answers:

- ▶ YES – 96 (58.18 %)
- ▶ NO – 69 (41.82 %)

Were you asked what your language of choice was? 164 answers:

- ▶ YES – 43 (26.22 %)
- ▶ NO – 121 (73.78 %)

Please rate your overall satisfaction with your services in French. 173 answers:

NOT SATISFIED	SOMEWHAT SATISFIED	NEUTRAL	SATISFIED	VERY SATISFIED
45 (26.01%)	22 (12.72%)	18 (10.40%)	22 (12.72%)	66 (38.15%)

HEALTH PROFESSIONALS WHO INCORPORATE ACTIVE OFFER

1. Establish with their patients quality relationships that are genuine and compassionate, and based on mutual respect and transparency;
2. Seek to understand the impact that cultural differences may have on the quality of health care and services;
3. Convey, through their actions, their respect for equitable access to French language care and services;
4. Understand the ethical consequences of their actions and behaviours toward their patients;
5. Determine at the first point of contact their patients' language preference (taking their patients' linguistic pulse... a vital sign);
6. Ensure that their patients are comfortable using the official language of their choice;
7. Guarantee equal use of both official languages in all aspects of care or services (oral and written communications);
8. Seek concrete opportunities to promote active offer; and
9. Play a leadership role to ensure steady improvement of their environment to make it more conducive to active offer.

Source: Lortie, Lalonde, and Bouchard, 2012

IMPLEMENTATION

- ▶ A bilingual greeting in person and on the phone;
- ▶ A bilingual voicemail message, email signature and business cards;
- ▶ The publication of documents in a bilingual format and the transmittal of correspondence in the official language preferred by the client;
- ▶ Bilingual web sites and social media;
- ▶ Posting of bilingual signage;
- ▶ Bilingual employees are identified by wearing a Hello/Bonjour badge or pin;
- ▶ A note of the preferred language in the patient's file; and,
- ▶ Valorization and legitimization of cultural and linguistic skills (celebration, open-mindedness).

Source: Forges, Bahi and Michaud, 2011; Partenariat communauté en santé, 2008.



IN A NUTSHELL...

Active Offer of French language services starts with a welcoming “Hello/Bonjour” greeting that invites clients to communicate in the official language of their choice. Then, to ensure that the active offer is effective, all employees who have the initial contact with the client must make every effort to provide access to quality service in the language chosen. Employees in designated bilingual positions must perform their duties in both official languages. However, all personnel must participate, including frontline employees, professionals and managers, whether they are bilingual or not, to ensure active offer, and especially to create a warm, welcoming atmosphere that promotes the Active Offer of French language services. Active Offer requires teamwork where all members are invited to participate!



QUOTES & NOTES

"When you embrace the principles of an active offer, it shows that you take the needs of your clients seriously and that you are committed to removing the barriers that hinder access to services." (*Healthy Communities Consortium*)

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"...I always feel at home when I receive services in French." (*Anonymous patient*)

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"French language services are just as important as English language services, and this is especially true for young children, seniors and newcomers." (*Anonymous patient*)

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"Providing service of equivalent quality in both official languages is a matter of professionalism, respect, integrity and social justice." (*Dyane Adam*)

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"The primary goal of the patient-centred approach to health care is to guarantee individually tailored care and to promote the importance of the personal relationship between the patient and the health service provider. It aims to improve the quality of care for all patients." (*Léonard Aucoin*)

I MAKE AN ACTIVE OFFER BECAUSE:

- ▶ I respect the language rights of the public;
- ▶ I cannot assume that I know the client's official language preference;
- ▶ I maintain a standard of service excellence;
- ▶ I represent the government of Manitoba;
- ▶ I promote Canada's fundamental values: linguistic duality, diversity, inclusion and respect.

DID YOU KNOW?

- ▶ Clients who are not immediately offered service in the official language of their choice may assume that service is not available in that language or that asking for it may cause delays or embarrassment;
- ▶ Just because there is little demand for service in French, that does not mean there is no need for it. An Active Offer invites members of the public to use the official language of their choice;
- ▶ You can help your team develop a reflex of greeting clients in both official languages by explaining how to make an active offer and why it's important.

FLS EMPLOYEE IDENTIFIERS

WRHA staff occupying designated bilingual positions shall wear one of the Hello/Bonjour bilingual identifying items available to them through WRHA French Language Services (FLS). The Hello/Bonjour bilingual identifying items can include: FLS lanyards, pins, badge pulls and buttons.



OUR COMMITMENT

The Winnipeg Health Region and all its service providers aim to:

- ▶ Improve access to health services in French, including primary health care;
- ▶ Ensure there are an appropriate number of organizations able to provide health services in French, consistent with Ministry standards;
- ▶ Ensure an adequate distribution of health professionals who are able to provide care in French;
- ▶ Provide information and resources in French;
- ▶ Respond to issues of interest and concern;
- ▶ Focus on the Active Offer of services in French;
- ▶ Increase staff awareness about needs of the French-speaking community;
- ▶ Collaborate with Francophone community representatives, and;
- ▶ Facilitate changes to improve the quality of services provided.



RESOURCES

The Winnipeg Regional Health Authority French Language Services mandate is:

To assist the WRHA in promoting and providing health services in French in accordance with its French Language Services policies, the Government of Manitoba French Language Services Policy, and regulations established under the legislation governing the Regional Health Authorities of Manitoba.

VIDEO - The importance of Active Offer



VIDEO - What is an Active Offer and why is it so important?



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