

French-language Services Plan

2021–2022

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 2021-2022 »

Message from the Deputy Minister

Bonjour!

The Department of Health and Wellness is working to meet the healthcare needs and priorities of the Acadian and Francophone communities in Nova Scotia. As we faced the COVID-19 pandemic, Nova Scotia quickly adapted to a new way of living, including new ways of receiving and delivering healthcare services in our province.

We worked closely with public health, Réseau Santé Nouvelle-Écosse (RSNE), and the French-language services coordinators (FLSCs) at the Nova Scotia Health Authority (NSHA) and the IWK Health Centre (IWK), to ensure Acadian and francophone citizens across Nova Scotia had access to COVID-19 information in French to protect their health.

In the year ahead, we will learn from the specific impact the ongoing pandemic has had on our Acadian and Francophone communities and create opportunities that will help shape healthcare delivery as we move through and past COVID-19 in 2021-22.

We will continue to encourage the advancement of French-language services in our province. To do this, we will promote the voluntary participation of staff in French language training within our department and produce initiatives to encourage recruitment and retention of francophone health professionals.

The Department of Health and Wellness French-language services plan provides an overview of actions as we continue to provide Acadian and Francophone citizens health care information and French services.

Dr. Kevin Orrell, Deputy Minister, Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness

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

This plan outlines the Department of Health and Wellness's efforts to promote health services in French and relates health services to the needs of the Acadian and francophone community.

The Department of Health and Wellness (DHW) works to engage and include the Acadian and francophone community in its priority initiatives. For instance, changes to the *Human Organ and Tissue Donation Act* were supported by a campaign to make Nova Scotians aware of important information related to the new Act, specifically how to opt-out of being a donor before and after the "deemed consent" legislation went into effect. This campaign included the translation into French of web pages, a poster and radio ads.

French-language services coordinators (FLSCs) from DHW, the Nova Scotia Health Authority (NSHA) and the IWK Health Centre (IWK) work collaboratively to share information in support of French-language services throughout the health sector. The roles and responsibilities for 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 Harold Rennie, who can be reached at Harold.Rennie@novascotia.ca and 902-424-6011.

Ongoing services we offer in French

- HealthLink 811 services are available in French through French-speaking nurses and on-demand third-party translation service. The HealthLink 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>
- The document *Bien vivre, services de soins continus* provides an overview of continuing care services in Nova Scotia (<https://www.novascotia.ca/dhw/ccs/documents/living-wel-%20continuing-care-services-fr.pdf>).
- 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, which was revised in July 2018. DHW's correspondence team, program areas and FLSC work together to ensure that correspondence that is 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.

Since early 2020, Antidote has been included in the suite of tools available for written communication. Antidote is not a translation software but a text correction software that can be calibrated for different regional audiences. This helps maintain a high standard of communication with Acadian and francophone stakeholders.

What we did to maintain or improve our French-language services in 2020–2021

The following describes key accomplishments against actions identified in the 2020-2021 French-language services plan:

- **Support compliance with the *French-language Services Act* and Regulations**
 - In 2020-2021, 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) and on OAAF's subcommittee on human resources and French-language training.
 - 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 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.
- **Raise awareness of French-language services at all levels**
 - A French-language services site was included in the new DHW Intranet (internal to the government) created and launched in 2020-2021.
 - French-language training was expanded in the following ways:
 - French courses were promoted within DHW, not only through e-mails and personal contact between the FLSC and individual employees, as in past years, but also through announcements on DHW's new Intranet.
 - Over four semesters in 2020, nine employees, including senior executives, took a total of 13 courses through Université Sainte-Anne. Another two employees took the new course entitled French for Healthcare, through Alliance Française.
 - **Support French-language services in the province by actions related to DHW's core activities**
 - Every English news release issued about COVID was also available in French, as is the entirety of the province's COVID website and other supporting materials.
 - DHW translated the revised outgoing message for its general inquiries phone line.
 - The Health Workforce Planning branch represented DHW on a working group organized by the Department of Labour and Advanced Education (LAE) to support French-speaking health professionals' recruitment. In March, the working group organized an evening session at Dalhousie's Global Health Office with students from Université Sainte-Anne to discuss opportunities in the health sector. Other activities were suspended until the fall due to COVID-19. DHW's FLSC maintained contact with LAE regarding the working group to see how DHW might contribute.
 - DHW's FLSC collaborated with program areas concerning MSI services to explore opportunities to expand accessibility in French.
 - DHW's FLSC provided summaries of official communications in French from health officials in francophone jurisdictions. These summaries were used internally by Intergovernmental Affairs.
 - **Enhance materials available to French-speaking Nova Scotians, in print and online**
 - Changes to the Gambling Support Network website were applied to both the English and French versions of the site, which was a planned measure in 2020-2021.
 - French-language posters about human organ and tissue donations were distributed to Acadian and francophone community organizations, to the board of directors of RSNÉ, to libraries in francophone areas and to MLAs whose constituencies included significant Acadian and francophone populations.
 - **Support the community in its development through consultations, collaboration and partnerships**
 - Recognizing the growing need for health information and data in French to support the community, the FLSC shared public releases in French of data from the Canadian Institute for Health Information with the board of RSNÉ.
 - DHW's FLSC continued to work collaboratively with the NSHA and IWK FLSCs to share information supporting French-language services throughout the health sector. In several instances, this involved clarification of responsibilities for translation or communication with the Acadian and francophone community. Other discussions involved new

opportunities for French training for employees in the healthcare sector and how to promote them.

- **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.
 - As in past years, the DHW FLSC attended the AGM of the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse (FANE), virtual in October 2020.
 - Through community contacts, DHW was aware of French surveys conducted by outside groups researching the health of Nova Scotia Acadians and francophones. These included two surveys on early childhood education and one relating to home care. The results will form part of an ongoing collection of research and statistical material about the Acadian and francophone community, which will serve as a valuable resource for DHW.

How we plan to maintain or improve our French-language services in 2021–2022

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: Expand access to MSI services in French
 - Planned measure:
 - DHW will continue measures leading to Nova Scotia residents communicating in French or English concerning MSI services.
- 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.
 - The internal policy on French Written Correspondence and Verbal Communication will be added to the DHW Intranet by April 1. Possibilities for internal promotion are being considered.
 - The site for French-language services on the DHW Intranet will be translated into French.

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:
 - DHW will start translating 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. The registrar of the Council works with DHW to provide effective oversight of the profession.

- DHW will continue to encourage French-speaking health professionals' recruitment and support through collaboration with LAE and RSNÉ.
- DHW will encourage the use of translation services by circulating information to DHW staff about preparing materials, including correspondence, for translation. Such a guide is now being prepared, drawing on the government's existing French-language Communications Guidelines. Once approved, it will be posted on DHW's Intranet.

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

- Goal 3.1: Increase availability of relevant health information in French to support the community in its development and to 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 FANE.