



# Quality Framework

for a High Performing  
Health and Wellness System  
in Nova Scotia



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Health and Wellness  
System in Nova Scotia

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Published by the Department of Health and Wellness

<http://novascotia.ca/dhw/qps/>

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# How to use this framework

The Quality Framework for a High Performing Health and Wellness System in Nova Scotia serves as a lens or guide to quality. The framework can provide a common vision and approach for Nova Scotia's health and wellness system. When applying the framework, focus on the quality dimensions most applicable to your situation. You may wish to adopt the framework or adapt it to develop locally relevant tools and strategies.

The five steps set out below can guide use of the framework at the system or organizational level.

## **Step 1. THINK Quality!**

### **Review and become familiar with the quality dimensions.**

Discuss the quality dimensions, including the tag line definitions, how they will look in practice, and what people receiving services will experience.

## **Step 2. ENSURE Quality!**

### **Establish a quality team.**

Include relevant stakeholders, partners, and an advocate or champion. Establish a governance process for quality, including roles, responsibilities, and accountability structures.

### **Identify quality initiatives.**

Identify, prioritize, and communicate quality initiatives, including targets or goals.

### Step 3. ALIGN Quality!

#### **Identify the focus of quality dimensions in your initiative.**

The dimensions of quality are interwoven, but sometimes you may need a greater emphasis on one dimension based on unique patient circumstances. When this happens, you need to be cognizant of possible “collisions” among dimensions—such as access or effectiveness, and safety. Be prepared to prioritize quality dimensions based on the current need or situation, recognizing that safety always needs to be the leading dimension.

#### **Align your quality initiative with relevant local, provincial, or national strategies, standards, and plans.**

Align with relevant strategies, system or regulatory standards, Accreditation Canada, best and promising practices, and strategic and operational plans. Linking your quality initiative will help promote a system-wide approach.



## Step 4. MEASURE Quality!

**Identify the tools and strategies needed to carry out your initiative.**

Select the tools and strategies and adapt as required to your local context. Consider how information will inform your quality initiative, including data collection, management, and reporting. Carry out your initiative, evaluating and reassigning along the way.

**Plan-Do-Study-Act is a proven way to help guide quality initiatives.**



## Step 5. PROMOTE Quality!

**Support a culture of quality.**

Quality is everyone's responsibility, so promote it as a shared responsibility and establish quality as a core value throughout the organization.

# Overview

A framework is often defined in the business world as an outline, or broad overview that supports a particular approach to an objective and serves as a guide. The Quality Framework for a High Performing Health and Wellness System in Nova Scotia is intended as a guide or lens to apply to the work happening throughout the health and wellness system, so that we are operating on one “quality vision” or broad “quality overview.”

The health and wellness system is complex and evolving. It includes the delivery of care and treatment, prevention of illness and injury, and promotion of health and healthy living. Collaboration among those delivering, receiving, managing, and funding the many interdependent processes within the system is critical. This may be achieved by engaging stakeholders, province wide, in setting priorities for improvement and integrating quality into all aspects of the system. A shared commitment to quality is fundamental to achieving improvement and excellence across the system.

This framework can be used as a tool to promote a provincial approach to quality. It is applicable to all aspects of the health and wellness system, including policy, planning, program development, service delivery, education, technology, equipment, infrastructure, and design. Consistency in our quality approaches and practices will lead to common best and promising practices across the entire system, greater sustainability, and, ultimately, improved health outcomes for all Nova Scotians.

**A health system that puts quality and patient safety first is better managed, a better draw for health care providers and will provide better care for Nova Scotians.**

# Quality framework

A high performing quality health and wellness system provides services that are always safe, period! Without safety, quality cannot be achieved. The importance of the safety dimension is therefore elevated in the framework.

A high performing quality health and wellness system also provides services that are people centred, respectful of diversity and equity, accessible, seamless, effective and appropriate, efficient, population focused, and supportive of healthy workplace culture.

**Quality evolves as a result of a culture that values, rewards, and promotes it.**

**–Citizen Voice**

Finally, a high performing quality health and wellness system provides services that are driven by information, whether systematic reviews, innovative practices, or the lived experience. “Driven by information” is a foundational and integral component to all other quality dimensions.

# Quality framework:

A high performing, quality health and wellness system provides services that are



# Quality dimensions

**The 10 dimensions of quality are intended to make the health and wellness journey a better one for everyone.**

While the dimensions are inextricably related, you may need a greater emphasis on one particular dimension of quality at any given time, depending on the situation. One must be cognizant, however, of possible “collisions” with the other dimensions and recognize that without safety, quality cannot be achieved. Those using this framework may need to prioritize the quality dimensions, based on the situation.

What follows is a closer look at each dimension, including a tag line and actions for the health and wellness system. It includes the outcomes people receiving service will experience as a result.



# Always safe

## Keeping people safe

### **What does this look like in practice?**

- Promote a culture of safety.
- Mitigate risks and protect against preventable diseases, injury, or loss.
- Learn from past failures and experiences.
- Work collaboratively across all sectors of the system to support quality and patient safety.
- Ensure good communication between providers and those receiving services and their families.
- Involve those receiving services, their families, and the public in planning for safety and quality.

### **What are the desired outcomes for people receiving services?**

*I feel safe and well cared for. I am encouraged to ask, listen, and talk to my care providers. I can help make health and wellness services safe.*

# People centred

## Putting people and their families first

### What does this look like in practice?

- Encourage those receiving services and their families to participate in decision making.
- Collaborate with those receiving services and their families to help shape their health and wellness journey.
- Ensure that providers respect and respond to people's choices, needs, and values.

### What are the desired outcomes for people receiving services?

*My family and I are included in the planning of my health and wellness services. I receive information about my health that I can understand.*



# Respectful of diversity and equity

## Providing services that are fair and respectful to all

### What does this look like in practice?

- Promote, value, and respect the healthcare rights of all citizens regardless of age, education, income, race, disability, geography, language, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, and faith perspectives.
- Work collaboratively to reduce avoidable health disparities and promote health equity for all.
- Use a needs-based focus for the provision of services, so that those with the greater need receive greater access to culturally competent, culturally specific, and culturally safe services.
- Understand and respond to the needs of diverse and marginalized populations.

### What are the desired outcomes for people receiving services?

*I know my healthcare rights; they are recognized and supported. I am confident that decisions are made to improve the health of all Nova Scotians and reduce avoidable health disparities.*

# Accessible

## Providing timely services

### **What does this look like in practice?**

- Continue to develop methods/models to help people get services when they need them.
- Ensure services are available in a suitable setting and when possible in a reasonable time and distance.
- Provide services that are easy for people to get to and use (for example, physically barrier free, well-designed spaces).

### **What are the desired outcomes for people receiving services?**

*I can get safe, quality health and wellness services when needed.*

# Seamless

## Coordinating services across the continuum

### **What does this look like in practice?**

- Communicate and collaborate with providers throughout the system to ensure services (including transitions) are well coordinated.
- Ensure that there is communication with those receiving services and their families.

### **What are the desired outcomes for people receiving services?**

*My health and wellness services are well organized. All health professionals involved work together as a team.*

# Effective and appropriate

## Doing the right thing to achieve the best possible result

### What does this look like in practice?

- Provide appropriate services that are based on best or promising practices; such practices have been proven effective by research or experience and can serve as an inspiring model to others.
- Provide services that produce the intended results.
- Provide services that consider individual and community needs.

### What are the desired outcomes for people receiving services?

*My health and wellness services are based on the best knowledge and evidence available. I receive services that are relevant to my needs, from the most suitable providers.*

# Efficient

## Making the best use of resources

### **What does this look like in practice?**

- When it makes sense, streamline processes to avoid duplication, waste, and rework.
- Consider the potential impact to those receiving services and their families.
- Ensure the optimal use of the time and talent of providers, while also respecting the time and experience of those receiving services and their families.

### **What are the desired outcomes for people receiving services?**

*I am confident that health and wellness system resources are used appropriately and responsibly.*

# Population focused

## Working with communities to anticipate and meet needs

### What does this look like in practice?

- Engage communities and provide meaningful ways for them to participate.
- Be transparent and accountable for health outcomes.
- Make decisions and investments that consider the full range of complex factors that influence health, including the social determinants of health, diversity, and health equity.

### What are the desired outcomes for people receiving services?

*I know that the public is consulted and involved in a meaningful way. I know that all factors that influence health are considered when decisions are made.*

# Supportive of healthy workplace culture

## Encouraging wellness in the work environment

### **What does this look like in practice?**

- Provide a safe, healthy, positive, and respectful environment for all individuals— employees, service providers, those receiving services, visitors, and volunteers.
- Provide an environment that enables optimal health outcomes for individuals and the organization as a whole.
- Promote a positive work life culture (which includes a “just” culture) and work life balance.
- Invest in people: build interdisciplinary teams; optimize communication and staff involvement; recognize staff contributions; promote learning; and increase skills, competencies, and capacity.

### **What are the desired outcomes for people receiving services?**

*My health and wellness services are provided in a positive environment and enable optimal health outcomes.*

# Driven by information

## Making evidence-informed decisions

### **What does this look like in practice?**

- Use current and relevant knowledge and evidence to guide decision making; this may include systematic reviews, innovative practices, and lived experience.
- Monitor, measure, and evaluate safety and quality data to continuously improve services.
- Seek methods to improve health outcomes and efficiency of services through research and knowledge translation.
- Promote knowledge exchange, share lessons learned, and build capacity within the health and wellness system, across other sectors, and among the public.

### **What are the desired outcomes for people receiving services?**

*My health and wellness providers make decisions based on evidence. They share information with me. My experiences are also used to help improve the health and wellness system.*

# Conclusion

This framework aims to build a common understanding of a provincial approach to quality. It applies to all aspects of the health and wellness system and is intended as a resource for planning, aligning, and implementing quality initiatives.

The framework recognizes that safety is a leading element in quality. The pursuit and attainment of quality is a shared responsibility that requires a coordinated and comprehensive approach. Consistency in our approach to quality and maintaining the commitment to safety will lead to improved health outcomes for all Nova Scotians.





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