

New strategic plan implemented by local health team

Hills of Headwaters Collaborative Ontario Health Team sets goals for 2024 to 2027

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A collaborative of local patients, physicians, and health, social and municipal agencies has charted its course for its next three years of service to the community.

The Hills of Headwaters Collaborative Ontario Health Team (HOHC OHT) announced on March 19 that its 2024 to 2027 strategic plan had been implemented.

HOHC OHT staff said the new plan will serve as a roadmap to creating a healthy and supportive community for all in Dufferin and Caledon. The plan outlines a new set of strategic priorities for the health team, and includes updated mission, vision and values statements for it.

The HOHC OHT's new strategic plan was created with the help of more than 17 community partners.

There are five strategic goals in the HOHC OHT's new strategic plan, and they are as follows: equitable health and well-being, health and social care integration, shared resources, partnership, and accountability.

Through these strategic goals, the health team looks to achieve the following outcomes in Dufferin-Caledon's health care system: increased early detection of chronic diseases; improved chronic disease outcomes; reduced acute care utilization; increased access to primary care services; improved system navigation support to help people find and access care; and increased access to integrated, team-based models of care for patients.

Tracy Coffin, Executive Director of the HOHC OHT, said the health team is proud of the work it's done since its inception in 2019 and is looking forward to achieving its new goals.

"Through a data-informed and collaborative decision-making approach, our strategic plan outlines our commitment to enhancing delivery of care and improving population health outcomes," said Coffin.

She explained that in two to three years, the HOHC OHT will become its own not-for-profit corporation, and the new strategic plan will guide the health team until that point.

Coffin noted many of the health team's partner organizations are making their strategic plans right now, so the health team was able to work with them in the creation of theirs to meet shared goals.

"It was great having them come to the table? having a fulsome discussion of what the needs of our community are and how we can best meet them," said Coffin. "Our role as an Ontario Health Team is to really bring together all the different providers of health and social services? to talk about how to deliver services better."

Improving access to primary care, such as a family doctor or nurse practitioner, is a big focus for the OHT. Coffin said in Dufferin and Caledon, there's around 15,000 people who do not have a primary care provider. These "unattached patients" can often have worse outcomes as they are unable to regularly see a health care professional.

Equitable care is also a focus for the HOHC OHT. Health team staff said they're placing emphasis on equitable care in the new

strategic plan, using Ontario Health's equity, inclusion, diversity, and anti-racism framework.

"HOHC OHT aims to shift systemic attitudes to ensure a reduction of disparity and inequity in how services are delivered and simplify overall access to health and social care," said HOHC OHT staff.

Coffin explained there's people in the community who aren't getting access to care as regularly as they should.

"Our unattached patients, they may have instability with housing or food insecurity? we want to make sure those most vulnerable people? get the equity they need," said Coffin. "For example, if you don't have a lot of money, you may not have Wifi? you may not have a smartphone? we have a document that's called 'where to go when you're not feeling well'. We feel it's very important that piece of paper can get into somebody's hand because often people who don't know where to go are the same people who are facing other barriers."

This document is available at many locations around Dufferin and Caledon, and Coffin said it's had an added benefit of reducing unnecessary emergency room visits.

Lesley Nagoda, CEO of Services and Housing in the Province and the co-chair of the HOHC OHT's Collaboration Council, said a connected health and social care system can have a huge positive impact on community and population health and well-being.

"HOHC OHT is honoured to serve the people of Dufferin and Caledon in creating a connected care system," said Nagoda. "We look forward to continuing this work in our community."

Coffin said the HOHC OHT is all about bringing everyone together to help the community.

"We're very excited that we're working in a connected way, that we're working with our partners? we're going to be accountable to this and ensure we're delivering what's best for the people who live here," said Coffin.