

French-language Services Plan

2023–2024

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 2023-2024 »

Message from the Deputy Minister

Bonjour,

This plan outlines our continued efforts to provide more health services in French and ensure the services we do provide meet the needs of the Acadian and francophone communities.

We have made progress in enhancing the department's service delivery in French by putting in place a structure to support delivering on the goals in our French Language Services Plan, published in 2022-2023. This plan identified key areas of focus in enhancing French-language services in the province.

In January 2023, we created a French Service Language Advisory Committee dedicated to working collaboratively to meet the goals of the plan. The advisory committee provides important guidance and support to the department's French Language Services Coordinator. The advisory committee is working closely with the DHW's Equity and Engagement division, which was created in 2021 to ensure community voices, strategic partnerships and lived experiences continue to inform and shape our vision and mission.

The advisory committee is a forum for employees to communicate, share best practices, and assess service delivery in French to support and represent the interests of French-language speaking staff, community groups, stakeholders, and Nova Scotians.

DHW will continue to engage Acadian and francophone communities on priority initiatives and work collaboratively with French-Language Service Coordinators with our health partners across the system, to improve service delivery for our French-speaking Nova Scotians.

Jeannine Lagassé, Deputy Minister, Department of Health and Wellness

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

This plan outlines the DHW's efforts to promote health services in French and relate health services to the needs of the Acadian and francophone communities.

DHW engages the Acadian and francophone communities in its priority initiatives. French Language Services Coordinators (FLSCs) from the Department of Health and Wellness (DHW), Nova Scotia Health Authority (NSHA), and the IWK Health work collaboratively to share information supporting French-language services throughout the health sector. The roles and responsibilities of 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 Réseau Santé – Nouvelle-Écosse (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 Raoul Tan-Yan, who can be reached at raoul.tan-yan@novascotia.ca

Ongoing services we offer in French

- 811 services are available in French through French-speaking nurses and on-demand third-party translation services. The 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>
- 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.
- Acadians and francophones in Nova Scotia were invited to share lived experiences accessing the Health System at <https://www.engage4health.ca/le-cadre-d-equite-en-sante> in French to inform the Health Equity Framework on racism, discrimination, disparities and other inequities.
- Acadians and francophones in Nova Scotia can access the Fair Care Race and Linguistic Identifier project web opt-in portal in French. <https://novascotia.ca/apps/rbli/>

How we communicate with the public in French

DHW has a French Written Correspondence and Verbal Communication Policy, revised in July 2018. DHW's correspondence team, program areas, and FLSC work together to ensure that correspondence 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.

Written and oral materials used in public engagement initiatives with the Acadian and francophone communities in Nova Scotia for the Health Equity Framework presented in French.

What we did to maintain or improve our French-language services in 2022–23

The following describes key accomplishments against actions identified in the 2021-2022 French-language services plan:

- **Support compliance with the *French-language Services Act* and Regulations**
 - In 2022-23, 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).
 - 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-19 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.
 - In partnership with our COVID-19 Exceptions Team, we worked with Communications Nova Scotia (CNS) to officially translate documents into French, including Border Approval Letters, Border Entry Letters and Border Application Letters.
 - We also updated our internal letterheads and signature lines to ensure our correspondence returned in French had the corresponding French language salutations and information attached.

- **Raise awareness of French-language services at all levels**
 - A French-language services site is available on our DHW Intranet (internal to the government) and continues to be updated.
 - French-language training was expanded in the following ways:
 - French courses were promoted within DHW through various channels, such as e-mails and announcements on our Intranet.
 - Staff participated in both Université Sainte-Anne programs and our internal awareness course, Acadie at a Glance, provided through the Public Service Commission.

- **Support French-language services in the province by actions related to DHW's core activities**
 - Every English news release issued about COVID-19 was also available in French, as is the entirety of the province's COVID-19 website and other supporting materials.
 - Tobacco Free Nova Scotia is available in French
 - DHW's FLSC collaborated with program areas concerning MSI services to ensure communication to clients was available in French.
 - The Equity and Engagement Division was created in 2021 to ensure community voices, strategic partnerships and lived experiences continue to inform and shape our vision and mission. The FLSC is now part of the new division, with 30% of divisional staff with Acadian and Francophone backgrounds.

- **Enhance materials available to French-speaking Nova Scotians in print and online**
 - DHW translated 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.
 - DHW translated the website for Tobacco Free Nova Scotia
 - Health Equity Framework community consultations in partnership with Réseau Santé conducted in French with translated presentation materials
 - Health Equity Framework public survey on interactions with the health system offered in French through collaboration with NSH engagement portal.

- **Support the community in its development through consultations, collaboration, and partnerships**
 - Provided a one-time funding of \$20,000 to RSNÉ, to support specific annual activities, such as meetups for Dalhousie francophone health students to improve engagement and interactions, simulated patient experiences to build linguistic competency, teaching health professionals about how to improve their service delivery in French, and supporting French reporting requirements to the Ministry of Seniors and Long-Term Care.
 - DHW's FLSC continued to work collaboratively with the NSHA and IWK FLSCs to share information supporting French-language services throughout the health sector and respond to inquiries related to DHW from their Bonjour intake service.
 - The Equity and Engagement Division created an Equity Strategy that identified external and community outreach with French-speaking communities as priorities for 2022-2023.

- **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.
 - In November 2021, *as part of the Speak up for Healthcare Tour*, the RSNÉ was invited to a meeting with our Minister, DM, and Office of Acadian Affairs and Francophonie Minister Colton LeBlanc to present the health issues facing the Acadian and francophone community and discuss the available solutions to allow for reliable, equitable, and safe patient care.

- **Create French Language Advisory Committee (FLSAC)**
 - In January of 2023 DHW officially created a French Service Language Advisory Committee (FLSAC) dedicated to working collaboratively to meet the goals outlined in the Department's FLSP

- Provide guidance and support to the French Language Services Coordinator (FSLC).
- Acts as a forum for members to communicate, share better practices, and assess and/or enhance the Department's service delivery in French to support and represent the interests of our French Language speaking staff, community groups, stakeholders and clients.

How we plan to maintain or improve our French-language services in 2023–24

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: Work with internal teams to support French Language Services delivery, where applicable
 - Planned measure:
 - DHW will continue to work with our partners at Insured Services to maintain and/or enhance the French language options for MSI services when requested.
 - The DHW FLSC will meet with NSH, IWK, Office of Addictions and Mental Health, Office of healthcare Professional Recruitment, Seniors and Long-term Care and other institutional partners with aligned goals to ensure coordinated efforts to strengthen our outreach to French-speaking communities.
 - Increase membership of the French Service Language Advisory Committee by 25%
- 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*.
 - Our main DHW intake telephone line recorded message will be updated in French.
 - Maintain our internal French Languages Services website with the most current guidelines and processes for translation services for DHW staff.

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:
 - Continue to offer French language written and verbal communication for ongoing and future public engagement initiatives through the Equity and Engagement division and Communications Nova Scotia.
 - The Office of Healthcare Professional Recruitment will offer the [Community Fund](#) written materials in French in 2024. OHPR is also willing to offer support and engagement in French through the French Service Language Coordinator and Advisory Committee.

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

- Goal 3.1: Increase the availability of relevant health information in French to support the community in its development and support future engagement.
 - Planned measures:
 - DHW will provide funding for a high school student interested in a career in health care to be employed at Réseau Santé as a summer placement. The student would be from the community and will be working on health-related work from a francophone perspective.
 - 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 Fédération Acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse (FANE).
 - Through the DHW Staff Equity Strategy and Action Plan released in 2022, we will continue external consultations with equity-seeking groups, including Acadian and Francophone communities, to address systemic barriers to healthcare.