

Let's Make Healthy  
Change Happen.



## Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) Narrative for Health Care Organizations in Ontario



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This document is intended to provide health care organizations in Ontario with guidance as to how they can develop a Quality Improvement Plan. While much effort and care has gone into preparing this document, this document should not be relied on as legal advice and organizations should consult with their legal, governance and other relevant advisors as appropriate in preparing their quality improvement plans. Furthermore, organizations are free to design their own public quality improvement plans using alternative formats and contents, provided that they submit a version of their quality improvement plan to Health Quality Ontario (if required) in the format described herein.

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## Overview

Serving a population base of approximately 115,000, Sault Area Hospital (SAH) provides primary, secondary, and select tertiary services to residents of Sault Ste. Marie and the District of Algoma. SAH is extremely proud of our dedicated staff, physicians, and volunteers. Our Mission, Vision, and Values are the cornerstones of quality improvement for our organization.

**Our Mission:** Exceptional people working together to provide outstanding care in Algoma

**Our Vision:** Trusted Partner. Outstanding Care.

**Our Values:** **Integrity** – We say what we mean and we mean what we say.

**Compassion** – We show concern and care for others.

**Collaboration & Partnership** – We promote teamwork.

**Accountability** – We are answerable for our actions and decisions.

**Respect** – We care about the well-being, dignity and uniqueness of everyone.

**Excellence** – We deliver our best every day and encourage innovation to continuously improve.

SAH continues to focus on the priority initiatives of our Strategic Plan 2022-2025 - Compassionate Person-Centred Care, Healthy and Supportive Organization, and Strengthening our Operations. In the development of our strategic directions, SAH consulted with our communities, partner organizations, patients and families, staff, physicians and volunteers.

The Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) this year includes three indicators related to Access and Flow, as we strive to provide timely access to emergency care and improve the flow of patients across the organization. As we move forward with our initiatives over the coming year, it is recognized that there are several external influences which may present additional challenges in the health system. SAH is committed to working in partnership with local care providers as we collaborate to improve ambulance offload times, reduce the wait time to see a physician in the Emergency Department, and improve throughput of Alternate Level of Care (ALC) cases. ALC throughput measures the effectiveness of improvements within our community that address issues such as access to long-term care beds, home and community resources, and ultimately moving patients to the right bed, in the right place, and at the right time.

SAH continues to prioritize worker safety. In accordance with the Strategic Plan and Ontario Health Quality guidance, we are focusing improvement efforts on reducing the number of incidents of violence. For several years, SAH has worked to build a reporting culture for incidents of workplace violence, and once established, we shifted the target to a reduction in the overall number of incidents of violence. We plan to continue this important work with a system lens and innovative focus to positively impact the safety of patients and workers. In summary, SAH is proud of our collaborative efforts both internally and externally as we present the QIP for 2024/25.

## Access and Flow

Optimizing system flow and providing timely access to care for patients, clients, and residents is a priority for this year's QIP and aligns with key elements of the SAH strategic plan. We are committed to assigning resources and working in partnership and across Algoma's health system on initiatives that reduce wait times and improve patient experience.

The Covid-19 pandemic and the healthcare challenges that surfaced as a result have provided opportunity to document lessons learned and leverage data in new ways to understand root cause and guide response. Flow issues and timely access to care means hospitals are collectively steering towards streamlined processes and increasing capacity. Two positive improvements we have made related to patient flow were increasing the operating hours of the Flow Department and providing frontline supervisory support for unexpected staffing and resource issues that arise outside of business hours. Adding a layer of on-site leadership is one way we are building frontline capacity and system support.

Another initiative that is under way relates to how we respond to increased demands for bed capacity. A working group was created to assess current state and identify a process to respond to escalating capacity needs while optimizing available resources. The innovative plan combines a technical application, reporting and communication, and a structured guidance algorithm. This initiative will be finalized and implemented in the spring of 2024.

Communication is another example of action we take related to improving access and flow. Our Communications and Media Services Department provides frequent community updates using various media sources to inform members of the public and care partners of increased wait times in the Emergency Department and guides patient decision-making in our community.

## Equity and Indigenous Health

At SAH we are committed to providing inclusive and culturally safe care to all, beginning with a focus on Indigenous Health. Culturally representative art work, signage, and messaging have been displayed in various areas in our organization, including our Spirit Room. We will continue to seek out new opportunities to have our partners' culture represented across the organization. Indigenous Cultural Sensitivity training was provided in person by our local First Nations partners for over 600 leaders, staff, physicians, and volunteers from SAH as well as our community partner organizations. We look forward to providing additional educational opportunities to address issues such as diversity, equity, inclusion (DEI) and anti-racism.

In addition to Maamwesying Indigenous System Navigators providing support to patients in our organization, a Child Welfare Protocol Agreement is in development in partnership with Nogdawindamin. We have also established a 'transitions in care' working group to improve how we collect and use patient demographic information to connect Indigenous patients and clients to health and social services in the community.

Nogdawindamin partners have shared teachings with workers in the Women and Children's Program and we are looking forward to expanding cultural teachings throughout the organization. In addition, we have partnered with the Algoma District School Board and Community Living Algoma to launch Project SEARCH, an internship program that offers students with disabilities the opportunity to gain employment skills and plan their careers with guidance from skills trainers and teachers. This program will expand and evolve over the coming years.

This year we are focused on recruitment efforts to expand our Patient and Family Advisor group, Volunteers, and Board Membership to reflect and represent a more diverse population.

## Patient/Client/Resident Experience

SAH demonstrates a commitment to our organizational Strategic Plan as we prioritize initiatives that support Compassionate Person-Centred Care. Our approach to the way we deliver care starts with recognizing patients as experts in their own care and including family members who feel heard and empowered to be active participants and partners of the health care team. There are multiple methods used to ensure we are effectively including the voice of patients, clients, and residents to continuously improve the delivery of care:

1. Patient experience is the primary measure of quality through the patient lens, and SAH has recently implemented a validated survey endorsed by the Ontario Hospital Association. The survey results will be used to gain new insight and reveal opportunity for improvement.
2. Our Patient Relations Department is committed to improving the quality of our services, and one key way we do that is through changes made as a result of patient comments. Our website is a tool that patients can use to send a compliment and/or raise a concern. We also receive information through phone calls and letters from patients directly.
3. The Patient, Family, and Caregiver Perspective is another way that we uphold our commitment to the community. At SAH, we have a strong team of patient and family advisors (PFA) who actively work across the healthcare system, participating at various levels, to ensure the patient voice is heard. Recently, several PFA members collaborated with SAH on the implementation and communication of a new mental health and addictions centre (Northway Wellness, Figure 1 and 2), which opened in the fall of 2023. To name a few of the many examples, PFA members are also providing a patient perspective related to QIP development, accreditation readiness, and the Emergency Department proposed Triage Reconstruction.



(Figure 1) Patient and Family Advisor Tour of Northway Wellness Centre



(Figure 2) Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addictions (CCSA) Conference, Vancouver 2023

## Safety

SAH is committed to improving the quality of our patient care services with the development of a standardized approach for safety incidents. Our patient and worker safety incident reporting system is a key management tool integrated into our Electronic Medical Record system. It ensures active monitoring, root cause analysis, investigation, and incident response prioritization, leading to effective learning and quality improvements. Through our various quality review processes, SAH examines incidents ranging from “near misses and good catches” to “critical incidents”. This allows meaningful engagement, learning, and improvements where the views of patients, families, and workers involved are listened to and acted upon.

SAH is excited to share our innovative and collaborative approach to improving patient and worker safety under one indicator as reflected in our 2024/25 QIP work plan. Under the Ontario Health priority issue of Safety, SAH has a goal to reduce the number of reported incidents of workplace violence. Historically, this indicator has been included in the QIP and it remains a priority for this year's QIP with a refreshed plan. In addition to keeping our workers safe, we are focused on patient safety as a monitoring or sub-indicator. Our multi-level plan for communication, education, and collaboration both internally and with our local care partners is aimed at reducing the overall number of incidents of violence while monitoring the effectiveness of change ideas. This new approach will be used to gain insight from incidents when they occur. Our patient and worker safety incident reporting system will provide some detail, and additional aggregate data will be used to tell a safety story. This priority initiative is aligned with the Strategic Plan as we provide integrated care to improve the patient experience, support a safe workplace, reduce workplace incidents, and provide high quality care that improves patient/worker safety and supports better outcomes.

## Population Health Approach

SAH is a proud member of the Algoma Ontario Health Team (AOHT), dedicated to establishing an integrated health system focused on the unique needs of Algoma residents. As we continue to collaborate closely with our healthcare partners and the AOHT, our commitment to health system improvement remains a top priority. This commitment is evident in our active participation in AOHT projects and quality improvement initiatives. A few noteworthy collaborative projects and initiatives include:

- The Community Wellness Bus
- Rehab Care Alliance Post-Fall Pathway
- Coordinated Access to Geriatric Services
- Increasing Access to Outpatient Geriatric Rehabilitation
- Algoma Mental Health and Addictions Roadmap

SAH staff and/or physicians are involved in the following AOHT committees and working groups:

- AOHT Leadership Council
- AOHT Healthy Aging Advisory Committee
- AOHT Quality Committee
- AOHT Digital Health Committee
- AOHT Privacy Officer Community of Practice
- Algoma Mental Health and Addictions System Planning Table
- AOHT Social Equity Working Group
- AOHT COPD Working Group
- AOHT System Navigation Working Group

As an engaged AOHT partner, SAH is involved in shaping AOHT priorities and working with health and social service providers across Algoma, spanning primary care, acute care, public health, home and community care, and long-term care sectors. SAH continues to strive towards a coordinated approach to health system improvement and will continue to work closely with our health system partners and the Algoma OHT.

## Digital Health

SAH has matured in our Digital Health journey over the past year. There have been several advancements achieved within our Digital Health ecosystem. A few examples are provided below.

First, SAH is one of three hospitals leading the region's ONE Initiative, designed to advance the vision of a single record for all patients through the implementation of Meditech's Expanse electronic health record. SAH is also implementing Expanse to outpatient areas. These efforts will result in improved quality and care delivery for patients. Similarly, our adoption of new business intelligence tools will expedite our journey toward advanced/predictive analytics and improving care delivery.

Second, a pilot project of medical interpretation software is noteworthy. This initiative allows us to break down language barriers by connecting patients and providers to an easy-to-use app that provides interpreter services in over 240 languages and dialects during medical appointments.

Third, the success of our Surgical Transitions Remote Care Monitoring (RCM) program continues. Patients enrolled in the program receive personalized pre-op education, progress-tracking, and post-op symptom monitoring using their smartphone, tablet, or computer. By providing self-reported data such as pain scores, symptoms, range-of-motion, and wound photos, the surgical care team stays connected and can quickly intervene when necessary. We have expanded our program, which now totals 15 care pathways in the areas of orthopaedic, general surgery, and women's health. To date, we have had over 2,500 patients enrol in the program and feedback has been overwhelmingly positive; the program has received accolades from patients and providers alike. Specifically, patients note that the program has helped improve their confidence and allay their anxiety:

- 94% felt that the program helped them feel more confident before surgery.
- 91% felt it helped them feel more confident at home after surgery.
- 37% reported that enrollment prevented one or more calls to the hospital.

An initial evaluation of our surgical program comparing RCM patients to non-enrolled patients showed the following improvements:

- 72% decrease in 30-day ED Visits.
- 64% decrease in 30-day Readmissions.
- 8% decrease in Length of Stay.

This program has also allowed us to increase the number of same-day-surgeries, which is now the case for the majority of patients undergoing joint replacements. Furthermore, the Surgical Transitions RCM program has augmented homecare or even replaced homecare service if it is not available. In other words, RCM can fill gaps in the system of care if/where any exist, for example, by providing support for wound management and guidance for physiotherapy exercises that patients can do at home. SAH has worked to sustain the Surgical Transitions program and spread RCM to other areas. Most recently, we are developing RCM within our Medicine Program with a focus on Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease and Congestive Heart Failure. We are also creating a new Maternity pathway to better support expectant mothers and their families throughout the many transitions of maternal care.

Our success with the Surgical Transitions RCM program is just one example of how we can enable safer hospital-to-home transitions and simultaneously empower patients to actively participate in their care journey. On a broader level, such programs can efficiently expand access to care, as well as serve the rural patient population more effectively, especially as we continue to grapple with the healthcare worker shortage.

## Executive Compensation

The Board of Directors approves strategic priorities on an annual basis along with performance targets for activities that support advancement of quality. In 2024/25, executive compensation is linked to the Quality Improvement Plan in the achievement of actions to advance the priorities for timely and efficient transitions in care and demonstration of a safe and healthy organization.


Each member of the SAH Executive Team is evaluated on their ability to meet a range of performance targets. A portion of their compensation is directly linked to the achievement of the organization's Quality Improvement Plan targets.

## Contact Information

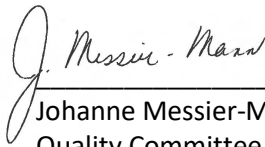
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## Sign-Off

I have reviewed and approved our organization's Quality Improvement Plan;



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Lisa Bell-Murray  
Board Chair



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Johanne Messier-Mann  
Quality Committee Chair



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Ila Watson  
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