

3.14 Bilingualism at HGH

Executive Limitations

Version Number	Description of Changes	Effective Date
1	Initial release	2012-06-27
2	Revision	2013-04-24
3	Revision	2016-03-23
4	Revision	2016-12-21
5	Revision	2019-05-22
6	Comprehensive revision	2026-06-17
7	Editorial revision (gender-inclusive language)	2026-07-27

Purpose

To establish the governance expectations of the Board of Directors regarding the provision of bilingual services at Hawkesbury and District General Hospital (HGH), in accordance with the organization's historical commitment to bilingualism, its designation under the French Language Services Act (Ontario), and the principles of equity, diversity, inclusion, and equitable access to culturally and linguistically appropriate care for Francophone communities.

This policy defines the executive limitations within which the Chief Executive Officer must operate to ensure that all clients, families, caregivers, and community members receive services in the official language of their choice, and that HGH maintains compliance with the requirements of the French Language Services Act designation.

Scope

This policy applies to all programs, services, and communications of HGH, including clinical care, administrative services, signage, digital platforms, written materials, telephone services, and community-facing activities. It applies to all employees, physicians, volunteers, and contracted service providers.

Monitoring: Annually (June) – report submitted to the French Language Services Branch of the Ministry of Health in accordance with the designation requirements and presented to the Board of Directors in June.

Guiding Principles

3.14.0 Whereas the practice established by HGH since its incorporation in 1977 provides that French and English are the official languages of the Corporation;

And whereas the Ministry of Health has identified HGH as a public agency that serves both the Francophone and Anglophone communities of Prescott-Russell and surroundings;

And whereas HGH is designated under the French Language Services Act (Ontario);

And whereas the HGH Board of Directors is committed to the following philosophy and principles:

3.14.0.1 Linguistic Inclusion and Cultural Safety: The Board recognizes the nature of the community it serves and is committed to offering all services to its clients in both official languages. The provision of bilingual services is an integral component of patient-centred, culturally safe care.

3.14.0.2 Right to Care in the Language of Choice: The Board recognizes that an integral component of the provision of care is to provide its clients with every opportunity to receive health care services in the official language of their choice.

3.14.0.3 Organizational Capacity: The Board recognizes that programs and services must be organized and the staff must be able to provide comprehensive, high-quality care to all clients in the official language of their choice.

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3.14.0.4 Active Offer: The Board is committed to the principle of active offer (*offre active*), which requires that French language services be offered proactively and visibly, without requiring clients to request them.

3.14.0.5 Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion: The Board recognizes that linguistic inclusion, particularly with respect to French-language services for Francophone communities is an essential dimension of equity, diversity, and inclusion in health care delivery. HGH's Franco-Ontarian identity and bilingual culture represent a foundational commitment to cultural responsiveness and the rights of linguistic communities.

Definitions

Active Offer: The proactive and visible offering of services in French to clients, without requiring clients to request French language services. Active offer includes greeting clients in both official languages, providing bilingual signage, and ensuring that French-language service options are clearly visible and accessible.

Designation Requirements: The specific requirements established by the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Francophone Affairs for agencies designated under the French Language Services Act. These requirements address governance, service delivery, communications, human resources, complaints management, and annual reporting.

French Language Services Act: Ontario legislation that guarantees the right to receive provincial government services in French in designated areas. HGH is fully designated (*désigné complet*) under this Act.

Linguistic Profile: The required level of French and English proficiency assigned to each position at HGH, in accordance with the Government of Ontario's standards for designated agencies. Linguistic profiles ensure that employees in client-facing, public-facing and remote service delivery roles have the language skills necessary to deliver services in both official languages.

Official Languages: English and French, as established by the historical practice of HGH since its incorporation in 1977 and confirmed through its designation under the French Language Services Act.

Procedure

Accordingly, the CEO:

3.14.1 Shall not fail to offer to HGH clients all services in both official languages.

3.14.2 Shall not tolerate that any communication material produced for or by the hospital, for internal and external use, not be written in both official languages. In urgent or time-sensitive situations where this may not be immediately feasible, communication may initially be issued in one official language, with the corresponding translation to be provided in the other official language as soon as operationally possible.

3.14.3 Shall not tolerate that any communication material produced for or by the hospital, for internal and external use, does not reflect high-quality linguistic standards and a professional image of HGH and its staff.

3.14.4 Shall not fail to ensure that all HGH employees who must interact with clients can do so in both official languages.

3.14.5 Shall not fail to ensure that one of the criteria of medical staff recruitment is the bilingualism component.

3.14.6 Shall not fail to offer second language training to all HGH staff.

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References

- ❖ ***French Language Services Act (Ontario), R.S.O. 1990, c. F.32***
- ❖ ***HGH Corporate By-laws (June 26, 2024) — Section 3.6(2) and 3.6(3)***
- ❖ ***Guide to Good Governance (OHA) – 4th Edition***
- ❖ ***Accreditation Canada – Governance Standards (HSO A1001:2022) — Standards 5.1.4, 6.1.4 (Cultural Safety)***
- ❖ ***Ministry of Health — Evaluation of Designated Agencies under the French Language Services Act (December 2, 2024)***
- ❖ ***FLHS Data Extract Report (2024–2025) — FLS designation compliance data submitted to the Ministry of Health***
- ❖ ***HGH Administrative Policy ADM-05-101 — Politique sur les services en français***
- ❖ ***Réseau des services de santé en français de l'est de l'Ontario***
- ❖ ***Policy 1.2 – Board of Directors' Code of Conduct (Section 1.2.8 – Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion)***