

# Family Health Teams

## *Advancing Primary Care*

### Bulletin No. 1/December, 2004

The Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's Health Results Team is proud to provide you with the first of a series of bulletins about Family Health Teams.

This first bulletin is intended to inform healthcare providers, stakeholders, communities and all Ontarians about the government's plans to improve access to primary health care services through the introduction of interdisciplinary Family Health Teams. It will provide information on what a Family Health Team (FHT) will be and our plans for working with you on establishing these local primary care delivery organizations.

Over the next few months we will use various methods to communicate with and seek feedback from health care providers, communities and stakeholders about our plans and activities.

#### **The Vision**

We know all Ontarians deserve the very best healthcare.

That is why the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (the ministry) is committed to working with our province's dedicated healthcare professionals to improve the healthcare system.

We want to make it more patient-centred and more responsive to local needs.

Primary Health Care is the “navigator” of the health care system. It provides clinical services as close to home as possible, it provides system access, and it provides continuity of care.

Family Health Teams will improve access to primary health care through the introduction of interdisciplinary health teams. These teams will be developed with cooperation and input from both the community and the providers. The teams will build on the successes of the past but may be different sizes and offer different programs, tailored to meet the needs of the local population they serve.

## What will FHTs do?

### Family Health Teams will:

1. Provide **comprehensive primary health care** services through an interdisciplinary team of doctors, nurses, nurse practitioners and other healthcare professionals as determined by local needs.
2. Provide **patient-centred care** where the patient is a key member of the team and uses provider information and support to make informed decisions on how to manage his/her self-care needs.
3. Provide patients with **expanded access** to care through the Telephone Health Advisory Service (THAS) and extended hours of practice.
4. Provide **system navigation** and care coordination – linking patients to other parts of the health care system such as acute care, long-term care, public health, mental health, addictions and community programs and services.
5. In larger centres, may include **diagnostic and outpatient services** such as X-ray, ultrasound, and minor surgery.
6. Emphasize **health promotion**, illness prevention, early detection/diagnosis.
7. Serve as a central driving force for the development of new comprehensive community based **chronic disease management** and self care programs.
8. Be linked with other health care organizations at the community level and, in general, be adapted to the needs of the specific **community** through some form of participation at the governance level.
9. Will use **information technology** as the backbone of system integration, linking patient records across different patient care settings giving providers timely and secure access to test results and other important data.

## Why FHTs?

We know many Ontarians are having difficulty in accessing needed primary health care and in finding a family physician. Family Health Teams will expand this access through interdisciplinary teams.

Ontario has made significant progress on achieving the goals agreed to in the Federal Health Accord for primary health care services. There already exist some very successful models of primary health care delivery, including Community Health Centres, Health Service Organizations and the Group Health Centre in Sault Ste Marie. What hasn't happened is a significant investment in interdisciplinary team care and provision for local flexibility.

Research evidence supports the need to focus on chronic disease management and health promotion and disease prevention. Family health teams will provide this focus through the skills of the interdisciplinary teams and the additional tools and supports provided to family physicians.

Ontarians need a one window access point to our complex health care system. Family Health Teams will provide this focus and care navigation.

## Family Health Team Action Group

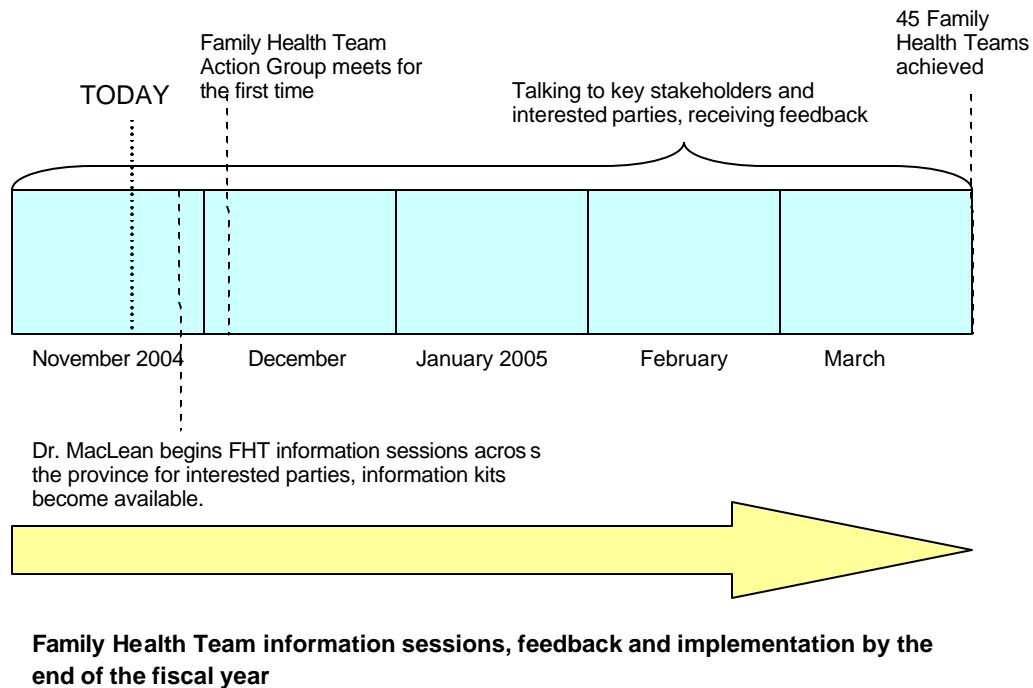
The ministry is pleased to announce the establishment of a provincial Action Group to provide expert advice on the design and implementation of Family Health Teams.

In an effort to ensure input from a broad range of providers and partners, the Action Group is composed of provincial associations and healthcare experts representing: family physicians, nurse practitioners, nurses, community mental health services providers, community health centers, hospitals, municipalities and researchers.

The Action Group will advise the ministry's Health Results – Primary Health Care Team in the areas of governance and accountability, collaborative practice models, health system planning and evaluation, service delivery coordination and integration, financial models and systems, change management and community engagement.

The Action Group is chaired by Dr. Ruth Wilson; it will be having its inaugural meeting on December 3, 2004.

## FAMILY HEALTH TEAM ACTION TIMELINE



### Our Plan For Working Together

In addition to working with the Family Health Team Action Group we're inviting input, advice and assistance from the full spectrum of health care providers in your community to develop and establish vibrant Family Health Teams. We will also be consulting with key stakeholder organizations to obtain insight and advice from a variety of perspectives.

Many of you are currently involved in primary health care and integration initiatives in your community. The MOHLTC recognizes the strong foundation these initiatives provide for assisting with the quick development of FHTs. Therefore, one of our first steps will be to work with these already committed and engaged groups to further the development of FHTs this fiscal year.

The government is committed to announcing 45 FHTs before April 2005.

### FHT Information Sessions

To help kick-start this process, the Ministry will hold information sessions in approximately 15 locations starting in late November. Specific details about dates, locations, and how to participate in these workshops will be provided directly to those who have already written or called us about their interest in Family Health Teams.

#### Information Session Objectives :

1. Provide the context for FHTs and their key role within the broader Health Transformation agenda.
2. Share information on FHT development.
3. Distribute information and toolkits that potential FHT sponsors can use to move forward with implementation.
4. Allow for session attendees to share ideas and opportunities for local collaboration.

**Each session will cover :**

- An overview of the FHT initiative by senior ministry officials.
- A question and answer period.
- An outline of the key aspects of FHT development and the support you can expect from the Ministry team.
- A facilitated discussion.

*For more information about Family Health Teams or other Primary Health Care initiatives, please contact:*

***Health Results Team - Primary Care***

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(416) 212-6155/1-866-766-0266 or by e-mail at:  
FHTinquiry@moh.gov.on.ca*

In preparation for these sessions, here are some questions to initiate your thoughts :

- Who is the population to be served by the Family Health Team?
- What are the key health care needs of this population?
- Who should the Family Health Team members be? Which providers are best able to meet the needs of the target population? Do you have the support and buy-in from these health care professionals?
- Who will manage and operate the Family Health Team organization?
- Who are critical local partners? Who can support and facilitate the development of the Family Health Team?
- What primary care services already exist in the community and how can the Family Health Team build upon these resources?
- What support do you need to move forward with the development of your Family Health Team?

Thank you for participating in building a more accessible health care system in Ontario. We look forward to working with you on this important initiative.