

Primary Care Services Standards



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Pilot project

This fall, Accreditation Canada is conducting pilot testing and a national consultation for its draft Primary Care Services Standards. Eight pilot organizations from across the country are participating and the testing is due to wrap up in early November. These standards will be integrated into the Qmentum accreditation program in 2010.

What is the difference between “primary care” and “primary health care”?

Primary care refers to the actual service(s) provided at an individual’s entry point into the health care system. Primary care services focus on the assessment, diagnosis, treatment, and ongoing management of common illnesses. Although primary care does involve health prevention and promotion for individual clients and their families, it focuses primarily on the diagnosis, curing and management of common health illnesses.

These services may be delivered in a family practice, clinic, hospital, or in the community. They can be delivered by one practitioner or a primary care group, team, or network.

Primary health care refers to a broader, population-based, proactive health services strategy that focuses on maintaining, managing, and improving the overall health of the general public. Primary health care services are offered outside of traditional

acute and specific health services, and typically include: primary care, teletriage, public health services, emergency medical services, and community health services.

What is commonly accepted as Canada’s primary health care strategy highlights the importance of

- prevention
- management
- promotion
- inter-agency cooperation
- community access to health services
- strengthening the continuum of service
- recognizing that health is influenced by many factors
- individual responsibility for health, including living a healthy lifestyle and seeking care when needed

What do the Primary Care Services Standards emphasize?

The Primary Care Services Standards focus on

- supporting a broader approach to primary health care
- having the right resources to deliver service
- working together to keep clients healthy
- providing access to health care system entry points
- delivering and coordinating care across the life cycle
- maintaining accessible and efficient clinical information systems
- monitoring quality and achieving positive outcomes

What are the objectives of the Primary Care Services Standards pilot project?

The objectives of the pilot are to

- evaluate the effectiveness of the standards
- test the Qmentum process with organizations that provide primary care
- test the processes customized for community-level organizations
- evaluate the customized primary care priority processes
- further refine the standards based on pilot results



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What is involved in the on-site survey?

Accreditation Canada surveyors are on site for approximately three days. The exact amount of time depends on the size of the pilot site, the services it offers, and whether the pilot organization is using both the Primary Care Services and Effective Organization Standards. An Accreditation Canada staff member will facilitate each pilot on-site survey.

The on-site survey ends with the debriefing session where surveyors present a summary of their findings to leadership and staff.

The Accreditation Canada staff facilitator then holds a focus group with selected staff members from the pilot organization to collect feedback on the standards content and their practical application. A similar session is held with the surveyors.

What else does the pilot project entail, other than the on-site surveys?

The national consultation of the Primary Care Services Standards is being carried out later this fall. This allows Accreditation Canada to obtain a large volume of feedback from numerous organizations throughout the country.

Adjustments will be made to the Primary Care Services Standards based on feedback received during the pilot testing and the national consultation.

How will the Primary Care Services Standards affect current Accreditation Canada client organizations?

Since Accreditation Canada accredits client organizations and their services as a whole, clients who offer primary care services will include the Primary Care Services Standards in their accreditation process, once the standards are released following the pilot, the national consultation, and the review and formal approval by our Accreditation Program Advisory Committee and Board of Directors.

Is Accreditation Canada involved in other areas of primary health care?

Yes. In early 2009, standards for Emergency Medical Services were added to the Qmentum accreditation program. These standards facilitate integration and linkages of Emergency Medical Services across the health care continuum (e.g. pre-hospital care) at organizational and system levels. These standards address the needs of various types of organizations and health care professionals who deliver Emergency Medical Services, including private and public organizations, paramedics, and land ambulance.

The introduction of these Primary Care Services Standards will effectively complement existing standards related to primary health care, such as Community Health Services, Emergency Medical Services, and Public Health Services, among others.

This fall, Accreditation Canada is also conducting pilot testing of its standards customized for community-level organizations.



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