Ontario
Palliative Care
Network

The Ontario Palliative Care Network
Action Plan 1: 2017 – 2020
A Plan for Better Access for All Ontarians

> “Service providers need to start talking to patients about palliative care as soon as a life-limiting illness is diagnosed, and those services should be available much earlier, not just in the last months and weeks of life… It is important that we raise awareness about what services are available and how to access them.” Denis C., caregiver

People with a life-limiting illness need specialized services to help with the physical, mental, emotional, practical and spiritual challenges they and their loved ones may be facing. And, at this most difficult time of their lives, they need a clear and easy path to those services. Although dedicated healthcare professionals, volunteers and loved ones currently provide compassionate care to patients across the province, Ontario needs “a co-ordinated system for the delivery of palliative care that enables patients to move easily among health-care providers to receive needed services on a timely basis,” according to the 2014 Annual Report of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario.

In 2016, the Ontario Palliative Care Network (OPCN) was established as a partnership of community stakeholders, health service providers and health system planners from across Ontario to develop a coordinated and standardized approach for delivering hospice palliative care in the province. Working together with LHIN CEOs, CCO Regional Vice-Presidents and the Regional Palliative Care Networks, the OPCN has set an ambitious but achievable multi-year plan to improve access to high-quality hospice palliative care services for Ontarians.

What will the Plan for better access mean for patients and their loved ones?

- Patients and their caregivers will be able to easily access information about what palliative care services are available.
- People who are diagnosed with a life-limiting illness will have early discussions with their healthcare providers to determine if they would benefit from palliative care.
- Patients and their loved ones will be encouraged to have discussions with their healthcare providers about palliative care. Healthcare professionals will receive training to initiate and support difficult conversations about issues such as goals of care, advance care planning and health care consent. These discussions will help ensure that treatment is aligned with the individual’s wishes and goals.

- Patients and their caregivers will understand the services that are available to them and have the information they need to make decisions about their care. Primary care physicians, community-based providers and long-term care home providers will know how to access specialized palliative care services and will help to develop an appropriate care pathway to meet their patients' needs.

- Caregivers (family, friends and loved ones) will have access to education and resources to support them in their caregiving role, whatever they choose that to be.

- Francophone patients and their loved ones will have access to culturally and linguistically sensitive care. Francophones will be able to receive care and information in French.

- First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people on and off reserve will be engaged to jointly identify gaps in palliative care and report on recommendations both at the regional and provincial levels.

- The plan will also identify gaps in palliative care and develop recommendations to address the challenges that some vulnerable populations (e.g. pediatric and homeless populations) have in accessing palliative care services.