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Evaluation of the Early Implementation of the Learning Community—Primary Care

Health Quality Ontario is pleased to share with you the final report on the evaluation of the early implementation of the Learning Community Program – a quality improvement (QI) initiative for Primary Care in Ontario. The evaluation assesses the implementation of Waves 1 and 2 of the Learning Community, providing important lessons to help us improve its components, strengthen support for teams and inform the planning and design of subsequent waves.

Facilitators and participants learned a great deal from this QI journey, and were equally enthusiastic in their praise of the program and their thoughtful suggestions for improvement. We have carefully assessed those suggestions and look forward to more participant input from subsequent waves.

The development of the Learning Community was an intense, collaborative and rewarding process for our organization and for participants. There was excitement in being part of this pioneering effort in Ontario, and the collaborative nature of the community was positively cited by all teams. The chance to meet face-to-face, and to network with and learn from other teams, was enthusiastically welcomed by everyone involved in the program.

The process also, at times, fell short. The evaluation highlighted areas for improvement, including too-rapid development, which sometimes resulted in a pace that teams, Quality Improvement Coaches and Managers and staff found challenging. A number of teams — especially those in smaller or solo practices — found it hard to attend learning sessions or devote time to planning and implementing the active periods. And the Gateway presented technological challenges to many participants, as they worked towards getting the most out of virtual sessions.

As we move into Wave 3 of the Learning Community, HQO has incorporated what we have learned through this evaluation to enhance a more sustainable and readily expandable program that reaches a much greater proportion of the primary health care community in Ontario. Key improvements to the process will include:

- **Maintaining the overall program cycle time while adjusting the first action period**, to ease the pace of the program and allow for fuller team participation.
- **Enhance the assessment process**, so that participants clearly understand expectations and requirements prior to confirming participation in the Learning Community.
- **Extending the preparation phase**, so that everyone feels ready to fully participate in the program.

- **Enhancing the coaches' roles**, to build on their noted success.
- **Maintaining face-to-face learning sessions and offering them regionally**, to build on networking and interactive learning opportunities.
- **Using more active learning cycles**, so that teams can better develop these practical skills.
- **Making the Gateway more user-friendly and accessible**, so that it becomes an integral part of the Learning Community.
- **Helping teams extract EMR data**, so that they are easily accessible and usable.

We would like to thank all of the participants in Waves 1 and 2 of the program, including all family health teams; networks and organizations; community health centres, NP-Led Clinics, managers and administrators, QI Coaches, and all HQO staff. Your commitment, dedication and enthusiasm for the Learning Community Program were evident throughout the process. On behalf of the Evaluation Committee, we would also like to thank Chris Frank and Associates and Rochelle Zorzi from Cathexis for their expertise in conducting this evaluation.

New Opportunity

Wave 3, our newest initiative focusing on Advanced Access and Efficiency is now open. This initiative is designed to offer different levels of learning intensity with different levels of support so that providers can find the best fit for their needs. Participants can learn how to implement the principles of Advanced Access and Efficiency independently or with the support of a Quality Improvement (QI) Coach. Primary care providers may begin Independent Learning at any time. Visit the Advanced Access website <http://hqolc.ca/wave3> to read more about it or to join. Providers who are interested in Coach-Supported Learning are encouraged to read the brochure <http://hqolc.ca/wave3> and visit the Advanced Access website. Applications to participate in Coach-Supported Learning are being accepted until September 12, 2011.

Sincerely,

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