

# Working Together to Implement the Active Offer of French- language Services

## PARTICIPANTS' GUIDE



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Active Offer of French-Language Health Services for Francophone and Acadian minority communities in Canada, *Joint Position Statement*  
Société Santé en français and the French Language Health Networks of Canada

*Note. In this guide, masculine is used as a neutral gender that refers to all persons and thus refers to both men and women.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 A word to participants in the implementation of an active offer of French-language services

Santé en français is pleased to publish *Working Together to Implement the Active Offer of French-language Services*, a guide designed to support all participants' efforts to ensure the active offer of French-language health and social services.

### 1.2 Santé en français – a leader in access to French-language services

Santé en français is the official representative of Manitoba's Francophone community in the areas of health and social services. It plays "a leadership role in facilitating and promoting access to French-language services in these areas<sup>1</sup>." As such, Santé en français has developed a training workshop available to all staff working in health and social services facilities, Regional Health Authorities (RHAs) and Child and Family Services Authorities. Working Together to Implement the Active Offer of French-language Services is a practical tool that will support training workshop participants, as well as all other employees in designated bilingual facilities.

### 1.3 Meeting the active offer challenge

The active offer of French-language services in health and social services facilities is a major challenge for any person responsible for its implementation. This issue raises many questions, such as:

- What is active offer of French-language services?
- Why do we need to implement the active offer of French-language services?
- Who is responsible for active offer?
- Who is the target population for the offer of French-language services?
- What facilities are required to actively offer these services?
- What strategies produce positive results?
- How do we overcome pitfalls and obstacles?
- How can we, as individuals, contribute to lasting systemic change?
- What resources are available to support initiatives on the active offer of French-language services?

*Working Together to Implement the Active Offer of French-language Services* answers these questions by targeting the following objectives:

- Increase awareness of the concept of active offer among all stakeholders, including managers, caregivers, service providers and support personnel;
- Define what constitutes genuine active offer and suggest implementation methods.



<sup>1</sup> Training workshop on the active offer of French-language health and social services, Conseil communauté en santé (now Santé en français), 2008, page 4.

## 2. LANGUAGE: A MATTER OF HEALTH CARE SERVICE QUALITY AND SAFETY

### 2.1 Basis for bilingualism: legislation and policies in Canada and Manitoba

To develop a clear understanding of the importance of health and social services facilities' ability to actively offer French-language services, one must first keep in mind the national and provincial linguistic contexts.

### 2.2 Canadian context

The Acts that ratified bilingualism (French and English) in Canada are:

- The *Constitution Act, 1867* and the *Constitution Act, 1982*;
- The first *Official Languages Act* enacted in 1969 and the new *Official Languages Act* introduced in 1988.

Initially, the adoption of these acts authorized and standardized the use of French and English in Canadian parliamentary debates, proceedings and documentation. Each revision of these two acts introduced "additional constitutional guarantees with respect to the status and use of Canada's official languages in all federal institutions of the Parliament and Government of Canada<sup>2</sup>." Finally, the 1988 Act "sets out the government's commitment to promote linguistic duality within Canadian society and to support the development of minority language communities<sup>3</sup>."



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<sup>2</sup> *L'offre de services bilingues dans le domaine de la santé et des services sociaux au Manitoba [Offer of bilingual health and social services in Manitoba] kit, Conseil communauté en santé (now Santé en français), 2008, Section 1.3.*

<sup>3</sup> Source: Government of Canada, Canadian Heritage, [http://www.pch.gc.ca/progs/lo-ol/billing/hist\\_fcfm](http://www.pch.gc.ca/progs/lo-ol/billing/hist_fcfm)

### 2.3 Manitoba context

The adoption of the *Manitoba Act* in 1870, established the bilingual character of the province, but in 1916, the *Thornton Act* revoked this guarantee and abolished the teaching of French in schools. It was not until 1970 that the Government of Manitoba adopted *Bill 113*. Since then, "French has resumed its position as a language of instruction on an equal footing with English in public schools in Manitoba<sup>4</sup>." For several years, Francophones won various cases, including the Forest case (1979), which led to the Supreme Court of Canada's declaration that The *Official Language Act* of 1890 abolishing the use of French in the Manitoba courts of justice was invalid. Subsequently, Manitoba's *French Language Services Policy* was introduced in 1989 and amended in 1999. The purpose of the policy is "to allow the French-speaking community and the institutions that serve it to access comparable government services in the language of the laws of Manitoba<sup>5</sup>." Pursuant to the adoption of this policy, the Gauthier report (1990)<sup>6</sup> recommended that the Government of Manitoba designate bilingual health and social services facilities. A few years later, the Chartier report (1998)<sup>7</sup> recommended that bilingual Community Service Centres be established in areas where a large proportion of the population is French-speaking. These and other events led to significant changes for the French-speaking community with respect to the availability of French-language health and social services. Finally, in June 2016, the long-awaited *Francophone Community Enhancement and Support Act (Bill 5)* was proclaimed by the Government of Manitoba.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid* 1, page 14.

<sup>5</sup> Source: Manitoba Francophone Affairs Secretariat - [http://www.gov.mb.ca/fls-slf/pdf/fls\\_policy.pdf](http://www.gov.mb.ca/fls-slf/pdf/fls_policy.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> Maurice A. Gauthier, *Study of French-language Services in Manitoba's Health Care Facilities*, October 1990 ("Gauthier Report") - <http://www.gov.mb.ca/fls-slf/pdf/gauthier.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> Justice Richard Chartier, *Above All, Common Sense - Report and Recommendations on French Language Services Within the Government of Manitoba, May 1998* (« Chartier Report ») - <http://www.gov.mb.ca/fls-slf/report/pdf/toc.html>.



#### *In a nutshell*

*The laws and policies in effect in Canada and Manitoba confirm linguistic duality and enable citizens to benefit from comparable French and English government services.*

### 2.4 Facilities providing health and social services concerned by Manitoba's French Language Services Policy<sup>8</sup>:

- Department of Health, Seniors and Active Living which funds Regional Health Authorities (RHAs);
- Department of Families, which funds Child and Family Services Authorities and agencies.

Some areas of Manitoba in which the French-speaking population is concentrated are designated bilingual; within these areas, RHAs and Family Services Authorities must "deliver a specified level of bilingual services by designating bilingual facilities, programs and services, and designating positions within them. Bilingual staff in these positions actively offer French-language services<sup>9</sup>."



#### *In a nutshell*

*Under French-language services regulations, designated bilingual Regional Health Authorities and Family Services Authorities in Manitoba, which are funded by Manitoba government departments, are required to take steps to ensure that comparable services are actively offered to the public in French and English.*

<sup>8</sup> See list in Section 5.2 of Chapter 5 (Recommended resources and tools).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid* 2, Section 1.3.

### 2.5 Relationship between linguistic competence and the quality of health care

The Gauthier and Reid report<sup>10</sup> highlighted the impacts of linguistic competence on the safety, effectiveness, patient-centeredness, equity, timeliness and efficiency of care.



#### *In a nutshell*

*"Linguistic competence comes down to providing quality services to the population". According to the Public Health Agency of Canada<sup>12</sup>, culture, including language, is one of the main determinants of health. The quality of services and health outcomes improve when we communicate with patients or clients in their mother tongue.*

<sup>10</sup> Gauthier, Hubert and Reid, Marc-André, *Linguistic Competence and Quality of Services, Business Case for Quality French-Language Health Care Services, March 2012, page 18* [https://santeenfrancais.com/sites/ccsmanitoba.ca/files/attachments/argumentaire\\_version\\_engl\\_maj\\_avril\\_2014.pdf](https://santeenfrancais.com/sites/ccsmanitoba.ca/files/attachments/argumentaire_version_engl_maj_avril_2014.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid* 8, page 19.

<sup>12</sup> [phac-aspc.gc.ca](http://phac-aspc.gc.ca).

## 2.6 Impact of the lack of health care or social services in the patient's or client's mother tongue (2012) according to Bowen<sup>13</sup>

### Decreased use of preventive services

- First contact is more difficult → reduction in the client's health

### Increased consultation time, number of diagnostic tests and likelihood of diagnostic and treatment errors

- ↑ Risk of hospitalization
- Adverse drug reactions
- Sub-optimal doses of pain medication

### Decreased probability of treatment compliance

- Patients' poor understanding of their condition affect their adherence to treatment

### Decreased client satisfaction with the care and services received

### Decreased quality of care and outcomes

- When interpreters are used → greater prevalence of errors affecting diagnoses and treatments

### Under-representation of linguistic minorities in research projects

- Study results cannot be extrapolated to the entire population → lack of knowledge about risk factors, disease prevalence, and response to treatment

### Decreased health care professional satisfaction

- It is more difficult to meet professional standards → greater liability risk

### Increased health care and social services costs

- Increased consultation time
- Diagnostic and treatment errors
- Under-utilization of preventive services



### *In a nutshell*

Language barriers have significant direct and indirect impacts on patient health care in particular and the health care system in general.

Importance of French-language services<sup>14</sup>:

- Foster a better understanding
- Provide better quality care and services
- Establish a better relationship between the professional and the patient or client
- Provide a better quality of life
- Avoid professional errors
- Avoid unnecessary service delivery costs.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid 8, pages 19 and 20.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid 2, page 47.

## 2.7 The mission and values of health or social services facilities: do they support the offer of French-language services?

Upon reading various mission and value statements of health and social services facilities, it becomes readily apparent that they explicitly target the delivery of quality services. These core values include trust, empathy, the importance of person-centred care, effectiveness, equity and competence. Note that these values are closely reflected in the results related to the impact of linguistic competence on the health care quality factors outlined in Gauthier and Reid's study<sup>15</sup>.



### *In a nutshell*

The active offer of French-language services is far more than an obligation dictated by our legislation and policies. It is in fact an indispensable strategy for implementing the mission and values regarding the quality and safety of health care services supported by all health and social services facilities in Manitoba.



<sup>15</sup> Ibid 8, page 18.

### 3. ACTIVE OFFER IN ACTION

#### 3.1 “Hello/Bonjour”: a good beginning...

In designated bilingual facilities, **active offer** is often initiated with a “Hello/Bonjour” greeting. The purpose of this greeting is to make all clients comfortable with choosing the official language in which they want to continue the conversation. This greeting tells clients that bilingual services are offered in the facility, but, as such, **is just the beginning** of the active offer approach to providing a continuum of services.

#### How is active offer defined?

In Manitoba, active offer is at the core of the French Language Services Policy adopted by the Government of Manitoba in 1989. It is defined as “all measures taken to ensure that services in French are **evident, readily available, easily accessible, known and of comparable quality to those offered in English.**”

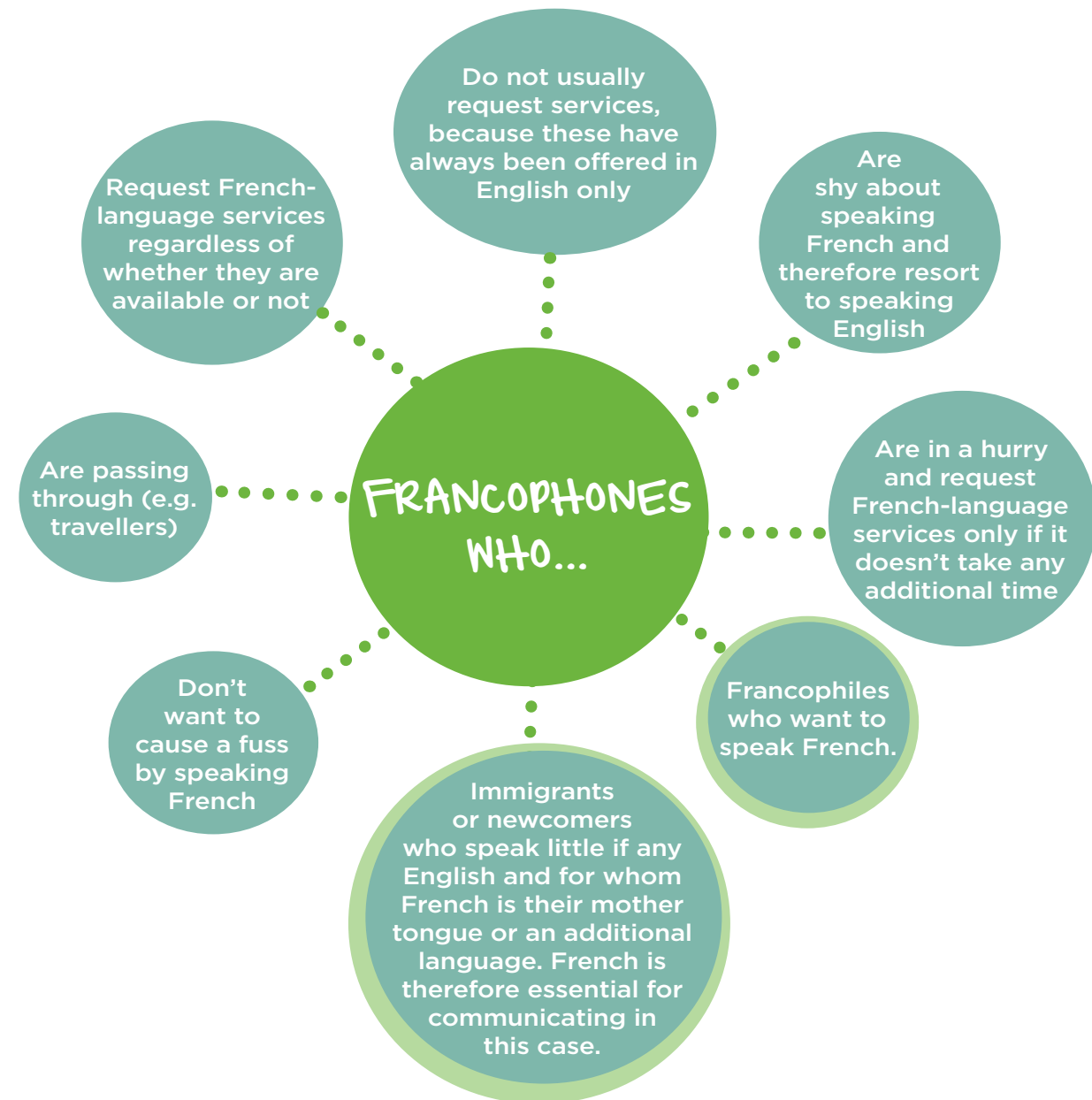
This definition complies with work accomplished at the national level on this matter. According to Société Santé en français (SSF), a pan-Canadian organization, “Active offer of French-language health care services is the regular and permanent offer of services to the Francophone and Acadian minority population. This offer of services:

- Respects the principle of equity;
- Aims for service quality comparable to that provided in English;
- Is linguistically and culturally appropriate to the needs and priorities of the Francophone and Acadian communities and is part of the overall person-centred services approach;
- Is inherent in the quality of the services provided to people and a major contributor to their safety<sup>16</sup>.”



#### 3.2 Which clients are likely to request French-language services?

Is it possible, by observation only, to determine whether an approaching client wishes to receive or request French-language services? Not at all. In fact, the client population who wants to communicate in French in the context of health or social services is very diverse. It can include<sup>17</sup>:



<sup>16</sup> Joint position statement on active offer, final version adopted by Société Santé en français's Board of Directors on February 20, 2016, page 2. See Section 5.1 of Chapter 5 (Recommended resources and tools).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid 1, page 54.



One cannot guess who will request French-language services.  
**Therefore, they must be offered to all clients.**

### 3.3 Designated Francophone and bilingual facilities in Manitoba: mandate and responsibilities

In Manitoba, facilities reporting to the Department of Health, Seniors and Active Living and the Department of Families, such as Regional Health Authorities, Family Services Authorities, as well as designated bilingual facilities, programs and services<sup>18</sup> under the French Language Services Policy, are mandated to actively offer services to the public. In order to implement active offer on a daily basis, these facilities must have a French Language Services plan and designated bilingual positions for front line employees, health and social services professionals and managers.

### 3.4 Designated bilingual positions: what is the meaning?

A designated bilingual position is a position where duties are to be carried out in both French and English. Such a position must be filled by an individual who speaks both official languages and is able to deliver comparable service in French and English<sup>19</sup>. However, in all cases where clients indicate that they wish to be served in French, employees of a designated bilingual facility are all responsible for providing the service in that language. If one does not speak French, the client should be referred to a colleague who is able to provide quality service in French.



#### *In a nutshell*

*Active offer of French-language services starts with a welcoming “Hello/ Bonjour” greeting that invites clients to communicate in the official language of their choice. Then, to ensure that the active offer is effective, all employees who have the initial contact with the client must make every effort to provide access to quality service in the language chosen. Employees in designated bilingual positions must perform their duties in both official languages. However, all personnel must participate, including frontline employees, professionals and managers, whether they are bilingual or not, to ensure active offer, and especially to create a warm, welcoming atmosphere that promotes the active offer of French-language services. Active offer requires teamwork where all members are invited to participate!*

<sup>18</sup> See the list of facilities in Section 5.2 of Chapter 5 (Recommended resources and tools).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid 2, Section 2.1.

## 4. ACTIVE OFFER ON A DAILY BASIS: WINNING STRATEGIES

### 4.1 Major challenges

Successfully implementing a true active offer of French-language services requires the commitment and cooperation of all facility staff, including managers, care or service providers and support staff. “Human resources are essential to improving access to French-language health and social services<sup>20</sup>.” In addition, even the most committed staff can face systemic challenges such as these<sup>21</sup>:

- “The pool of human resources is inadequate to provide French-language services;
- Service organization is not sufficiently focused on the needs of Francophone clients;
- The system is not sufficiently committed to normalizing the use of French in the health care setting;
- Demand for French-language services is fragile; and
- Community-based efforts to train the next generation of French-language health care workers are inadequate.”

### 4.2 One step at a time: strategies for implementing active offer

Although challenges arise on a daily basis, they are not insurmountable. They require employees of designated bilingual facilities to be creative and willing to address them. All proactive steps taken by staff to implement active offer can lead to systemic changes that improve the quality of French-language services offered and, as a result, the quality of health and social services for Francophones.

#### *In a nutshell*

*The purpose of active offer is to make French-language services visible, easily accessible and comparable in a welcoming setting (Section 3.1). The goal is to make the active offer of French-language services the standard in designated bilingual services to promote optimal health within the Francophone population.*

**Everyone can make a difference!**

#### 4.2.1 Let's begin: strategies to create a welcoming atmosphere

- Greet the public by saying “Hello/Bonjour” in person and on the telephone.
- Display English and French leaflets.
- Display “Hello/Bonjour” signs at counters staffed by bilingual employees.
- Create a list of persons who can offer services in French.
- Wear the magnetized “Hello/Bonjour” pin indicating that you offer bilingual services.
- Wear a pin indicating that you are learning French.

In principle, these welcoming gestures seem both logical and desirable, but in some situations employees who wear these pins can hesitate to use the “Hello/Bonjour” greeting and run into “pitfalls” that can undermine the success of the active offer of French-language services.

#### 4.2.2 Some typical scenarios and examples of proactive solutions

Each designated bilingual health or social services facility has its own particular context and issues. Teams of frontline employees, health and social services professionals and managers need to explore possible solutions that are well suited to the circumstances of the workplace and allow them to offer French-language services in a sustainable manner. Some common scenarios and a non-exhaustive list of possible solutions for each scenario are presented here. Proposed solutions for scenarios 1, 2 and 3 are presented together because they are relevant to each case.

##### Scenario 1

*A staff member does not speak French and when he says “Hello/Bonjour,” he is not actually able to continue the conversation in French. He therefore has the impression that he is misleading the client.*

##### Scenario 2

*The bilingual employee who could respond to the client's needs is absent for various reasons, in the short or long term.*

##### Scenario 3

*The employee believes he does not speak French well enough to deal with the client in this language.*

In all three scenarios, the employee may proceed as follows:

- Start by indicating that French-language services are available when recording the telephone message, if applicable;
- Learn a few key French words or expressions, thus displaying a genuine effort to offer service in French at the client's request (e.g. “un moment s'il vous plaît<sup>22</sup>”) and then if necessary, explain in English that a bilingual employee will help or call him, as appropriate;
- Consult the list of bilingual staff at the facility;
- Contact the French-language services coordinator to inquire about which French-language resources are available for the client;
- Transfer the case to a bilingual professional in another department;
- Ask for the services of an interpreter as a **last resort**, because this is not considered a comparable service;
- **Avoid** asking the client if he would accept service in English.

#### *In a nutshell*

*Every effort made by all members of the personnel, regardless of whether or not they are bilingual, to proactively offer French-language health and social services helps to improve service quality, shows respect for the client, increases demand and, as a result, the availability of resources needed to offer these services in the long term.*

<sup>20</sup> Santé en français, *The ability to think, act and dream: for French-language health care in Manitoba*, Position paper submitted by the Santé en français Board of Directors to the Société franco-manitobaine regarding the États généraux de la francophonie manitobaine, June 30, 2015, page 6.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid* 18, page 6.

<sup>22</sup> A glossary of key English and French expressions is presented in Section 5.1.1 of Chapter 5 (Recommended resources and tools).

**Scenario 4**

*A health care provider wonders what language to speak to a Francophone client who addresses him in English but who speaks only French to the person accompanying him (e.g. spouse, parent, child).*

When it is evident that the client speaks French, although this person may have addressed the provider in English, the provider may proceed as follows:

- Take the opportunity to be proactive in offering services in French. For example, say: “Would you rather that we speak French?” and then comply with the client’s choice. Francophones often speak in English out of habit formed by past necessity, but are very pleased to be able to speak French when given the opportunity.

**Scenario 5**

*A client asks for information in French and the caregiver can provide it orally in French, but can only provide him with English leaflets on the topic.*

Some ideas to improve written communication in a designated bilingual health or social services facility:

- Have French and English materials available at all times; they must be of comparable quality.
- If the documentation is not available in French, offer to send it to the client once it is translated or offer to interpret it for him in the meantime.
- Follow the standard operating procedure for translating available English-language publications into French.

- Ensure that the quality of written communication in both official languages is equal (e.g. emails, letters, etc.).
- Contact the French-language services coordinator or the person in charge of French-language services to obtain translation services or editing support when the quality of a French text is inadequate.

**4.2.3 Situations involving particular challenges**

From time to time, all client service activities give rise to communication issues that are difficult to resolve and can test your facility’s staff. For example:

- A client who angrily expresses his disagreement with the offer of services in both official languages, English as well as French;
- An English-speaking client who wishes to speak French, but does not have a good command of the language and is therefore very difficult to understand;
- A French-speaking client who uses very colloquial language that contains many errors and anglicisms.

**4.2.4 How to diffuse potential conflicts**

- **A frustrated or hostile client.** 

Often, people who are opposed to the active offer of French-language services are not aware of the regulations and the *French Language Services Policy* and may perceive this approach as unnecessary, too costly and therefore undesirable. Staff who welcome clients who are opposed to the bilingual “Hello/Bonjour” greeting should neither apologize for offering services in both official languages nor start a discussion on the importance and relevance of French-language services. On the other hand, there are sometimes exceptional circumstances there are exceptional circumstances that prevent the facility from immediately providing French-language service to a Francophone client who insists on being served in French (e.g. temporary absence of bilingual staff). In either case, it is preferable to proceed as follows:

- Maintain a friendly approach and avoid reacting defensively, regardless of the client’s attitude.
- Reassure the client that the service can be provided in the official language of choice and ask how the facility can be of service.
- If the service cannot be provided in the client’s language of choice, explain the situation and offer the option of speaking to a bilingual person as soon as possible.
- Develop an action plan to ensure that active offer is available at all times.

- **The client has a poor command of the language.**



Sometimes it can be difficult to understand the language spoken by clients or to be understood by them because they find it difficult to express themselves correctly in the official language chosen, either because it is not their mother tongue or their vocabulary is very colloquial and includes many expressions from another language. In these situations, it is desirable to proceed as follows:

- Talk to the client using correct professional terms, making sure not to upset him.

- If necessary, use more familiar terms to ensure the client understands the message.
- Take the time to understand the client, even if conversing with him is difficult.

**4.2.5 Pitfalls to be avoided**

In order to offer French-language services in accordance with the definition of active offer adopted by Société Santé en français (see Section 3.1 of this guide), certain types of responses should be avoided. Responders are asked to consult the list of reliable tools presented in Section 5 of this guide. Here are some examples of **responses to be avoided**:

- Asking a Francophone client whether he would accept services in English – this runs counter to the principle of active offer.
- Apologizing for offering services in both official languages – our policies and laws guarantee the offer of English- and French-language services in government facilities.
- Using the services of an interpreter, unless there is an urgent need – this may lead to information being added or omitted, and words and ideas being substituted. In short, the information provided to the client may be incorrectly interpreted, jeopardizing the quality of care<sup>23</sup>.
- Using poor online translation software (see the applications suggested in Section 5.1.3 of Chapter 5 (Recommended resources and tools).
- Translating correspondence without having it revised by a professional.

**In a nutshell**

*The principle of active offer is based on offering services in the clients’ language of choice. Be proactive in offering bilingual services in spite of challenges that may arise on a daily basis when actively offering services, especially with respect to the minority official language. This not only shows respect for the person, but also shows genuine concern for his well-being and health.*

<sup>23</sup> Ibid 8, pages 33 and 34

#### 4.2.6 Contributing to systemic change: teamwork counts...

As stated previously, anyone who works in a designated bilingual facility has a role to play in actively offering French-language services, regardless of the position he holds. However, to ensure a comprehensive active offer of services, the frontline employees, professionals and managers of these facilities must work closely together and be supported by a health and social services system focused on client needs. Often these stakeholders have to deal with recurring questions or objections when trying to initiate services in French or rationalize the need for them, such as<sup>24</sup>:

- Why French and not other languages?
- Since Francophones in a minority community are often bilingual, what is the need for French-language services?
- French-language services are expensive and unnecessary.
- How is an employee's linguistic competence measured?
- When making staffing decisions, is linguistic competence (bilingualism) more important than other factors such as seniority, clinical skills, etc.?
- Does designating and staffing bilingual positions run counter to collective bargaining agreements?
- Wouldn't interpretation services be sufficient to offer French-language services?
- If we don't attract any candidates for a designated bilingual position, why not fill it with a unilingual candidate instead of leaving it vacant?
- How can we encourage people who do not apply for designated bilingual positions because they lack confidence in their linguistic competence?
- How can we recognize and support bilingual employees to ensure they do not suffer as a result of their bilingual status?
- How can we determine the number and nature of bilingual positions required in a particular facility?

#### 4.2.7 The critical importance of teamwork in actively offering services

Every staff member of a facility can contribute actively to implementing a strategy for the active offer of French-language services and thus, can be involved in systemic change. Everyone, including frontline employees, professionals and managers, has a special role to play in improving the quality of health or social services offered in French. Through dialogue and proactive search for creative solutions at various levels within the workplace, a team can take a wide range of actions to support active offer.

##### 4.2.7.1 Frontline employees' contribution



123RF/johan2011

Frontline employees who have direct contact with clients, ranging from administrative support to janitorial personnel, contribute significantly to the ambiance of the workplace. For example, administrative support staff at the reception desk in a designated bilingual facility occupy key positions. They:

- Create an environment that makes clients comfortable about speaking the official language of their choice;
- Set up bilingual display equipment and signage in reception areas or waiting rooms;
- Greet clients in accordance with the principles of active offer.

Frontline employees play a vital role in improving bilingual services. However, their efforts must be recognized by a management team that is willing to invest in the tools and support they need to perform their duties.

##### 4.2.7.2 Role of health and social services professionals

Professionals (e.g. therapists, doctors, nursing staff, social workers, etc.) are instrumental in implementing an active offer of bilingual services. Client satisfaction, the quality, safety and efficiency of patient care and services, not to mention the satisfaction of the professionals themselves, depend on the following:

- A high level of proficiency in both official languages;
- Concerted efforts within the framework of clearly stated and well known facility policies regarding the offer of bilingual services.

In short, the health and well-being of the Francophone population are based on the health system's ability to recruit and retain bilingual professionals who can provide French and English-language services of comparable quality.



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##### 4.2.7.3 Managers' responsibilities



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All issues raised in Section 4.2.6 require careful planning by managers who, in addition to implementing active offer as comprehensively as possible within their facility, are well placed to:

- Report these concerns to government authorities in a consistent manner;
- Emphasize the need for support and necessary structures to organize the health and social services system in order to ensure services are actively offered in the field;
- Adopt proactive strategies for staffing all designated bilingual positions within their facility;
- Implement strategies for recognizing bilingual staff and introduce language skill development incentives;
- Ensure that the active offer of French-language services is clearly outlined in the strategic plans of designated bilingual facilities.

Gauthier and Reid (2012)<sup>25</sup> suggest a number of best practices for the successful implementation of active offer.



<sup>24</sup> Ibid 8, pages 32-37

<sup>25</sup> Ibid 8, pages 32-37.

## 5. RECOMMENDED RESOURCES AND TOOLS

### 4.3 Conclusion

This guide has attempted to explain the obligation to offer French-language services in health and social services facilities in Manitoba that report to Manitoba Health, Seniors and Active Living or Manitoba Families. In addition, many research studies establish a direct link between the quality of health or social services and the language in which the service is offered. They also document the effects of language barriers on patient and client health outcomes and on the entire health system. The active offer of French-language services is an approach that is in line with the mission and values of health and social services facilities in providing safe, high quality person-centred care. The principle of the active offer of French-language services involves offering visible, accessible services comparable to English-language services in a welcoming environment that encourages Francophones to use them. Scenarios highlighting challenges and potential solutions were presented in the guide as examples. The systemic concerns which particularly affect managers in designated bilingual facilities were raised, and finally, a list of resources and tools was included to support the staff of bilingual facilities in planning and offering French-language services on a daily basis. In short, **teamwork within designated bilingual health and social services facilities is the key to improving the quality, safety and efficiency of health care and social services as part of a successful strategy to actively offer French-language services.**

### 5.1 Language resources

#### 5.1.1 For a warm welcome: useful sentences and expressions

Bonjour. <i>Good morning/Good afternoon.</i>	Bonsoir <i>Good evening</i>
Je vais demander à un employé bilingue de vous rappeler. <i>I will get someone who is bilingual to call you back.</i>	Je regrette, il (ou elle) est absent du bureau en ce moment. <i>I am sorry, he (or she) is away from the office at the moment.</i>
Puis-je vous aider/Est-ce que je peux vous aider? <i>May I help you?</i>	Je regrette... <i>I am sorry...</i>
De la part de qui s'il vous plaît? <i>Who is calling please?</i>	Je regrette, il est présentement occupé. <i>I am sorry he is not available at this time.</i>
Un moment s'il vous plaît. <i>One moment please.</i>	Je regrette, il est en réunion. <i>I am sorry, he is in a meeting.</i>
Excusez-moi. <i>Excuse me.</i>	Je regrette, vous vous trompez de numéro. <i>I am sorry, you have the wrong number.</i>
Vous voulez annuler votre rendez-vous? <i>You want to cancel your appointment?</i>	Voulez-vous laisser un message? <i>Do you wish to leave a message?</i>
Je transfère votre appel à un employé bilingue. <i>I will transfer your call to a bilingual employee.</i>	Si vous voulez plus de renseignements, vous pouvez communiquer avec... <i>If you want more information, please contact....</i>
Aimeriez-vous parler à quelqu'un d'autre? <i>Would you care to speak to someone else?</i>	Au revoir. <i>Goodbye.</i>
Puis-je avoir votre nom et votre numéro de téléphone s'il vous plaît? <i>May I take your name and telephone number?</i>	Je vais chercher une personne bilingue pour vous servir. <i>I will get someone who is bilingual to serve you.</i>
Pourriez-vous répéter s'il vous plaît? <i>Would you mind repeating your message please?</i>	Puis-je lui demander de vous rappeler? <i>May I have him return your call?</i>
Désirez-vous prendre un rendez-vous? <i>Do you wish to make an appointment?</i>	Merci. <i>Thank you.</i>
Veillez-vous asseoir./Assoyez-vous/ Asseyez-vous. <i>Please have a seat.</i>	De rien. /Je vous en prie. /Il n'y a pas de quoi. <i>You are welcome.</i>
Suivez-moi s'il vous plaît. <i>Please follow me.</i>	Désolé, je dois vous déranger pour vos soins <i>Sorry to disturb you. I need to...</i>

### 5.1.2 Documentation on the definition and rationale for the active offer of French-language services

- Government of Manitoba DVD on Active Offer — <http://www.gov.mb.ca/fls-slf/activeoffer.fr.html>
- Consortium national de formation en santé's (CNFS) active offer portal — <http://www.offreactive.com>
- Testimonials on the importance of French-language services (CNFS) — <http://cnfs.net/fr/videos/.php>
- Business Case for Linguistic Competence and Quality of Services, Santé en français — [https://santeenfrancais.com/sites/ccsmanitoba.ca/files/attachments/argumentaire\\_version\\_engl\\_maj\\_avril\\_2014.pdf](https://santeenfrancais.com/sites/ccsmanitoba.ca/files/attachments/argumentaire_version_engl_maj_avril_2014.pdf)
- Active Offer of French-language Services Video — <https://vimeo.com/192958963>
- Statistics Canada — <http://www.statcan.gc.ca>
- Active Offer of French-Language Health Services for Francophone and Acadian minority communities in Canada, *Joint Position Statement*

### 5.1.3 Other language tools

- Santé en français online glossary — <http://santeenfrancais.com/lexique>
- Canada School of Public Service — Language Portal of Canada — TERMIUM Plus — <https://www.noslangues-ourlanguages.gc.ca>
- Le grand dictionnaire terminologique (Office québécois de la langue française) — <http://www.granddictionnaire.com>
- Le trésor de la langue française informatisé — [atilf.atilf.fr](http://atilf.atilf.fr)
- MED INTERPRET application bilingue, Accueil francophone de ThunderBay — [www.accueilfrancophone.com/med-interpret](http://www.accueilfrancophone.com/med-interpret)

## 5.2 Who to contact for bilingual services

### 5.2.1 Designated Bilingual Regional Health Authorities in Manitoba

- Southern Health/Santé Sud — [www.southernhealth.ca/boardofdirectors.php?lang=fr&](http://www.southernhealth.ca/boardofdirectors.php?lang=fr&)
- Prairie Mountain Health/Santé Prairie Mountain — <http://www.prairiemountainhealth.ca/>
- Interlake-Eastern Regional Health authority/Office régional de la santé d'Entre-lacs et de l'Est — [www.ierha.ca/default.aspx?cid=6093&lang=1](http://www.ierha.ca/default.aspx?cid=6093&lang=1)
- Winnipeg Regional Health Authority/Office régional de la santé de Winnipeg — [www.wrha.mb.ca/about/board/index-f.php](http://www.wrha.mb.ca/about/board/index-f.php)

### 5.2.2 List of Designated Bilingual Social Services Agencies and Authorities

Bilingual Service Centres (<http://www.csbsc.mb.ca>) located in:

- Saint-Boniface, Winnipeg
- Saint-Pierre-Jolys, Red River Region
- Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes, Mountain Region
- Saint-Laurent, Interlake Region
- Saint-Vital, Winnipeg
- Sainte-Anne, Seine River Region
- Child and Family Services Authorities
  - General Child and Family Services Authority — [www.generalauthority.ca](http://www.generalauthority.ca)
  - Metis Child and Family Services Authority — [www.metisauthority.com](http://www.metisauthority.com)
  - First Nations of Northern Manitoba Child and Family Services Authority — [www.northernauthority.ca](http://www.northernauthority.ca)
  - Southern First Nations Network of Care Child and Family Services Authority of Manitoba — [www.southernnetwork.org](http://www.southernnetwork.org)
  - Child and Family All Nations Coordinated Response Network — [www.ancr.ca](http://www.ancr.ca)

### 5.2.3 Safe housing and comprehensive support services for women who have left an abusive relationship

- L'Entre-temps des Franco- Manitobaines, Inc. — [www.entretempsfm.com](http://www.entretempsfm.com)

## 5.3 Government departments and agencies

### 5.3.1 Government of Manitoba

- Manitoba Education and Training — <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/index.html>
- Manitoba Health, Seniors and Active Living — <http://www.gov.mb.ca/health/>
- Manitoba Families — [www.gov.mb.ca/fs/index.fr.html](http://www.gov.mb.ca/fs/index.fr.html)
- Manitoba Francophone Affairs Secretariat — <http://www.gov.mb.ca/fls-slf/intro>

### 5.3.2 Government of Canada

- Public Health Agency of Canada — <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/index-fra.php>
- Seniors — [aines.gc.ca](http://www.aines.gc.ca)
- Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages — <http://www.ocol-clo.gc.ca>
- Canada School of Public Service — <http://www.csps-efpc.gc.ca/index-eng.aspx>
- Canadian Institutes of Health Research — <http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca>
- Health Canada — <http://hc-sc.gc.ca/index-eng.php>
- Statistics Canada — <http://www.statcan.gc.ca>

## 5.4 Provincial and national Francophone networks

- Santé en français — [santeenfrancais.com](http://santeenfrancais.com)
- Société Santé en français — [santefrancais.ca](http://santefrancais.ca)
- Consortium national de formation en santé — <http://cnfs.net/fr/videos/.php>

# Active offer OF FRENCH-LANGUAGE HEALTH SERVICES

for Francophone and Acadian minority  
communities in Canada



## Joint Position Statement

Société Santé en français and the French-Language Health Networks of Canada

## Background

The *Société Santé en français* is a pan-Canadian umbrella organization that supports the work of 16 provincial, territorial and regional networks tasked with rallying the partners in their areas for the planning and organization of French-language health services for Canada's Francophone and Acadian minority communities.

The collective mission of the *Société Santé en français* and French-Language Health Networks is to ensure better access to quality French-language programs and services in order to improve the health of all Francophone and Acadian minority communities. Many studies indicate that the language of communication between a professional providing a health-care service and the person receiving the service is a significant factor in the quality, efficiency and safety of the service.<sup>1</sup> The minority language situation is a determinant of health.<sup>2</sup>

One of the four major priorities for the *Société Santé en français* and French-Language Health Networks is the organization and adaptation of services to ensure better accessibility. Our goal is to improve the offer of health services in French by integrating Francophone needs into the development of high-quality French-language services along the entire health service continuum. We aim to achieve this by increasing the availability and offer of services directed towards all manner of individuals and by making the offer active.



The communities served by our member networks are diverse in nature and require customized solutions. However, an active offer is still expected to be the best solution for ensuring access to services, whatever these are, taking into account the needs and realities specific to each environment.

After examining the foundations and forms of active offer in the varied context of French-language health services in Canada's minority communities, we have come to a common understanding of active offer, which we set forth in this document.

This document establishes the relevance of active offer, expresses our understanding of active offer as it relates to the needs of Francophone and Acadian minority communities, identifies our partners' roles and responsibilities in its implementation and emphasizes our commitment to working with our partners to institute active offer.<sup>3</sup> The commitment of our partners is key to ensuring that the active offer of French-language health services becomes a reality in Canada's Francophone and Acadian minority communities. Active offer will ultimately lead to improved access to French-language health services in minority settings.

<sup>1</sup> From the *Société Santé en français* (2013). *Destination Health 2018: Quality, Safety and Wellness in French*. Page 4. Let us cite, for example, the study of Bowen, S. (2001). *Language Barriers in Access to Health Care*. Ottawa: Health Canada.

<sup>2</sup> Bouchard, L., and Desmeules, M. (2013). Les minorités linguistiques du Canada et la santé [Canada's language minorities and health]. *Healthcare Policy*. Volume 9, special. edition. Pages 38-47.

<sup>3</sup> The text of this statement has largely been drawn from the following source: *French Language Health Planning Entities and French Language Health Networks of Ontario* (March 2015). *Joint Position Statement on the Active Offer of French Language Health Services in Ontario*.

## Active offer<sup>4</sup>

Active offer of French-language health services is the regular and permanent offer of services to Francophones and Acadians in minority communities. The active offer of services:

- respects the principle of equity;
- aims for service quality comparable to that provided in English;
- is linguistically and culturally appropriate to the needs and priorities of Francophone and Acadian communities, and builds on a holistic approach of person-centred services;
- is inherent in the quality of services provided to people and an important contributing factor to their safety.

It is the result of a rigorous and innovative process for planning and delivering services in French that advocates a variety of strategies such as raising awareness and providing tools and support.

It relies on shared accountability at several levels and requires partners to exercise appropriate leadership with respect to health services in French.

In concrete terms, it takes the form of a range of health services available in French and offered proactively, which means that services are clearly advertised, visible and easily accessible at all times without placing the responsibility of requesting services on the clients.



<sup>4</sup> The *Mouvement Santé en français* [Movement for French-language health services] has adopted the definition put forward by the French Language Health Planning Entities and French Language Health Networks of Ontario [March 2015]. *Joint Position Statement on the Active Offer of French Language Health Services in Ontario*.

## Our partners in implementing active offer

We have identified five partners that are key to improving access to French-language health services: policy makers, health-care administrators, health professionals, educational institutions and communities.

Active offer requires that each partner commit, assume responsibility and cooperate. The following paragraphs set out the roles and responsibilities of each partner.

### Policy makers

The policy, legal and regulatory framework of access to French-language health services varies from one province or territory to another. The specificities of each province or territory must be taken into account. All levels of government enact laws, policies, regulations and plans to ensure access to health services in French. Their responsibilities include making available the expertise, resources and accountability mechanisms required by the system organizations with respect to active offer or health services in French.<sup>5</sup>

### Administrators

Administrators of clinical, public and community services are responsible and accountable for quality, person-centred services. Administrators play a leadership role by opening the governance of their organizations to the Francophone and Acadian community, by stating their policy on active offer, and by publicizing this commitment. Administrators plan and coordinate their actions accordingly. They build an internal culture that supports active offer and hire professionally and linguistically competent staff. Lastly, administrators continuously assess and improve their capacity to provide quality health services in French.

### Professionals

Health professionals working in clinical, public and community sectors use their professional, linguistic and cultural competencies as well as their ethical judgement to proactively welcome their Francophone and Acadian clients in French, understand their needs, and provide them with the necessary care or refer them to the resources able to provide such care. Health professionals also take on a leadership role in their environment by promoting active offer. In this way they ensure quality of care for, and the safety of, the people served.

### Educational institutions

Educational Institutions equip future French-speaking executives and professionals for active offer of quality health services in French.<sup>6</sup>

### Communities

Francophone and Acadian communities actively use French language health services to express their needs and obtain appropriate care. As language is a determinant of health, communities also contribute to the improvement of health services by communicating their viewpoint on the quality of care they receive, by expressing emerging needs or, when possible, by participating in the planning and governance of the organizations responsible for health services.

<sup>5</sup> Inspired in part by Gauthier, H., and M.-A. Reid Triantafyllos. (2012). *Linguistic Competence and Quality of Services* prepared for *Santé en français* [Manitoba].

<sup>6</sup> Lortie, L., Lalonde, A., & P. Bouchard, (January 2012). *Cadre de référence pour la formation à l'offre active des services de santé en français* [reference framework for the training for active offer of French-language health services]. Prepared for the *Consortium national de formation en santé* [national health education consortium].

# Our commitment

We work jointly with our partners to ensure the active offer of health services in French; these efforts require their commitment, cooperation and an appropriation of responsibility.

The *Joint Position Statement on Active Offer* is evidence of our commitment to our partners to work with them in planning and developing this active offer.



## FRENCH-LANGUAGE HEALTH NETWORKS OF CANADA

