

February 9, 2011

## **LHINs to Release Community Engagement Guidelines**

With the creation of LHINs, the provincial government recognized Community Engagement as a key responsibility in administering health care for the 14 regions established across Ontario. To date, educating, consulting, and involving the community in health care decisions has been part of the LHIN's work.

As of February 15, 2011, standard Community Engagement Guidelines will be released by the provincial LHINs to promote best practice and accountability in their practices. The guidelines put in place tools that all LHINs will use in developing and carrying out community engagement. Moreover, they outline requirements for evaluating plans through external review committees, demonstrating community engagement results, and reporting performance against planned results in their Annual Reports.

In the spirit of transparency, LHINs will begin posting Annual Community Engagement Plans online as of April 1, 2011. The documents will provide the public with an understanding of the community engagement activities anticipated in the coming year, goals for engagement, and how the community can expect to participate in these processes. Additionally the guidelines will be posted online as of February 15, 2011.

An additional resource to support the engagement of physicians as a key stakeholder will also be made available, titled Engaging Primary Care Physicians in LHIN Processes: Primary Care Physician Engagement Resource Guide and Toolkit.

The finalization of the plans will address concerns expressed by the provincial Ombudsmen in his report released in August of 2010, about use of community engagement in LHIN decision-making process. Specifically, he noted engagement practices to be "undefined and inconsistent".

With the tools in place, LHINs will look to standardizing their engagement processes and continuing their dialogue with the community in order to make informed decisions reflecting local interest.

In Erie St. Clair, our most recent three year plan was created through the support of a number of engagement initiatives including consumer focus groups, committees, social media (Facebook), and interviews. This included plans for helping people with Diabetes, where those living with this disease directly provided their feedback, influencing future direction for Diabetes care.