

# Fostering Mutual Support Among FHTs in the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant LHIN



As the largest Family Health Team in Ontario, the HFHT has the capacity and responsibility to foster support between each of the FHTs in our region. Each of our organizations has similar needs and encounters similar operational challenges; therefore, it makes sense from an operational and economic perspective to share solutions whenever possible. Below are some ways that we encourage FHTs in the HNHB LHIN to support each other.

## **Bimonthly Meetings**

FHTs in the HNHB LHIN have committed to meeting on a regular basis in order to: discuss common operational challenges and share solutions; help each implement and evaluate quality improvement projects and the collection of data to be reported to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care; participate in continuing education; address political issues that may affect the operations of FHTs; and more. The HFHT provides the administrative support required to run these meetings.

## **Human Resources and Legal Support**

Most organizations – even high functioning ones – encounter human resources (HR) and legal challenges from time to time. Managing these kinds of challenges can be daunting and expensive. In order to help our fellow FHTs address these needs as they come up in their own organizations, we

are always willing to share our HR and other organizational policies and resources; invite other FHTs to training regarding provincially mandated changes to HR or legal procedures; and offer guidance based on past organizational experience when HR or legal challenges may arise. The HFHT also encourages our fellow FHTs to support one another in these regards whenever appropriate.

## **Quality Improvement and Practice Facilitation Support**

The size of our organization has enabled us to have a large team of Quality Improvement Decision Support Specialists (QIDSS) and Practice Facilitators (PFs) on staff. These team members help the healthcare providers on our team participate in self-initiated quality improvement projects. A QIDSS or a PF will work with a family physician and their team to analyze practice-specific data about patient visits, wait times or chronic disease management and help the team come up with solutions to improve these aspects of care. The HFHT has extended the support of QIDSS and PFs to other FHTs in the HNHB LHIN as many of these FHTs do not have the budget for such extensive quality improvement support.

## **Management Support to a Struggling FHT**

Over the past three years, the HFHT has gone above and beyond to support a specific FHT in the HNHB LHIN that has faced leadership and operational challenges. We provided our fellow FHT with a temporary executive director (a senior manager from our own team) and offered guidance for restructuring their board of directors and developing a strategic plan. We assisted this FHT in finding a new executive director to take the helm, and we continue to meet with the leadership team to provide ongoing support as needed.

## **Supporting Consolidation Efforts in the LHIN**

Small Family Health Teams face unique challenges in that they have limited capacity to forge economies of scale and implement a supportive administrative structure. In some areas of the LHIN, there is more than one FHT in the same geographical area. Where it makes sense, and where there are compatible cultures, we have encouraged and supported consolidation into one larger FHT.

