

LHIN engagement meetings serve as myth-busters

Prior to the first round of community engagement sessions in the Mississauga Halton LHIN, providers told senior LHIN staff member Scott McLeod that there would be significant priority discrepancies between themselves and the public.

Beginning May 1, the LHIN held 12 meetings in six separate geographic areas. Providers typically met during the day and the public sessions were held in the evening.

For providers, meetings focused on four major themes – primary care, chronic disease management, seniors, and mental health and addiction treatment - in health care provision in the Mississauga Halton LHIN, a small region including Oakville, Milton, Mississauga, Halton Hills and parts of Etobicoke.

In the public forums, participants were asked to focus a person's life cycle and to view health care provision along that continuum.

Most remarkable, says McLeod, Senior Director of Planning, Integration and Community Engagement, was the congruence in areas of focus between the public and provider forums.

"Some providers had said that the public 'doesn't know what we do,'" says McLeod. "We were quite delighted to see that they do and to see recognition around issues like primary care."

Senior staff and board members, with the assistance of consultants at Price Waterhouse Cooper, are using the community engagement sessions to develop the Integrated Health Services Plan (IHSP). The IHSP will contain a profile of the LHINs priorities and look at ways to improve services and increase

integration opportunities.

Unlike other LHINs, a number of whom plan to prolong engagement in order to glean as much quantitative and qualitative information to help construct the IHSP, Mississauga LHIN representatives hope to have an early draft available by mid-summer, and then revise it through another round of engagement sessions. The IHSPs are expected to be released province-wide by early October.

The LHIN's community engagement strategy began May 1st. Answering the question 'What is a LHIN?', Michael Fenn, CEO would provide an overview of the responsibilities of LHIN staff and explain the re-structuring of the province's health care system and the grassroots approach of the engagement process.

"We discovered that there are still a lot of myths out there," says McLeod. "The meetings had a myth-buster component to them."

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