

# Access to Health and Social Services in Canada's Official Languages: Standard CAN/HSO 11012:2018 (R2022)



Highlighting best practices to enhance the visibility and credibility of the importance of health and social services in French.

Developed by the **Health Standards Organization (HSO)** at the request of the **Société Santé en français (SSF)**, this standard aims to improve access to health and social services for Francophone and Acadian minority communities in Canada.



**Purpose of the standard:** a framework designed to **promote the continuous improvement of the quality and safety of care** by fostering linguistic accessibility in health and social services.

- ### Objectives of the standard
- ▶ To reduce language barriers in accessing health and social services
  - ▶ To reduce risks associated with poor communication
  - ▶ Establish a common foundation for language accessibility in healthcare facilities
  - ▶ To enhance the quality, safety, and effectiveness of care.

### Scope

Define what needs to be achieved without prescribing how to achieve it.

### Applicability

Applies to health and social services organizations that provide services in English and French.

The standard consists of five sections:

- Setting up an active offer of services
- Governance and leadership
- Workforce
- Quality Assurance
- Clinical Research

## From the development of a co-created standard to the success of an advocacy strategy

Increase awareness of the **importance of language skills** in research and health networks

Creation of a pan-Canadian advisory committee to recommend the development of a **standard on access to health and social services in official languages**

Launch of the **eQUITY platform** aligned with the standard's indicators

OLRP—Implementation of Level 1: **Discovery** (self-reflection and priorities)



- ### Some observations
- ▶ **Gradual** mobilization: Commitment to the OLRP often takes up to 2 years.
  - ▶ **Sustained** collaboration: an essential driver for implementation.
  - ▶ **Structural** standard: strengthens **the active provision of services in French**.
  - ▶ **Flexible** regulation: based on **quality and voluntary participation**.

### Testimonial - Impact of the standard (PEI)

« Since the introduction of the active offer (2023) in our home care program: **131** French-speaking clients identified (0 previously); **59** initial assessments and **45** assessments conducted in French; **89** bilingual documents for clients; **216** employees trained in active offer. The initiative also led to the creation of bilingual positions and the opening of the first French-language day center for home care clients. »

**Elise Arseneault**  
French Language Services Analyst, PEI Health, and Director of the PEI French Health Network

- ### Limitations of the standard
- ▶ Voluntary participation: standard is not legally binding.
  - ▶ Potential inequalities among institutions, related to resources and financial capacity.
  - ▶ A market-based regulatory mechanism relying on the commitment of organizations.

### What happens next?



The standard **does not replace a legislative framework**, but proposes a **collaborative regulatory approach** in which health and social service institutions participate in promoting **linguistic equity**.

Its impact depends **on its legitimacy and its adoption** by stakeholders in the field.



**Next step:** re-evaluation of the standard in **2027**.



**Key challenge:** raising awareness of the standard, **encouraging adherence to the OLRP**, and supporting the implementation of concrete measures to ensure **genuine access to health and social services in both official languages**.

### References

eQUITY Link (2024). [French language health services made simple and accessible](#)  
 Accreditation Canada (2026). [Accreditation Canada - Official Languages Recognition Program](#)  
 HSO (2026). Standards - CAN/HSO 11012:2018 (R2022):2022 - [Access to Health and Social Services in Official Languages \(Reaffirmation\) - HSO Health Standards Organization](#)  
 Larocque, F. and Bouchard, L. (2025). Accès aux services de santé et sociaux pour les communautés francophones en situation minoritaire du Canada: la co-construction d'une norme nationale volontaire.. Revista de Lléngua i Dret, 94–112. [Link to the article](#) (in French)  
 Société Santé en français (2026) – [Diagnostic of a success Story](#)