

Patient Relations Measurement and Reporting Frequently Asked Questions



Q. What is patient relations?

A. Patient relations focuses on improving how hospitals, home and community care, and long-term care homes gather and respond to feedback, concerns, and complaints about care from patients, residents, clients, and their families and friends. Effective patient relations involves engaging patients and residents to understand their needs and preferences. It also includes the use of patient experience and patient complaints data to support quality improvement.

Q. What is Health Quality Ontario's commitment to improving patient relations?

A. As a result of amendments to [The Excellent Care for All Act](#), Health Quality Ontario is responsible for measuring and reporting on patient relations indicators, and supporting quality improvement in patient relations processes in hospitals, home and community care, and long-term care homes. Health Quality Ontario will also consult with the Patient Ombudsman Office, who is tasked with facilitating resolutions and investigating complaints involving health sector organizations and making recommendations to improve the health care experience for all Ontarians.

Q. Are there patient relations indicators my organization should be collecting and reporting?

A. Yes. Health Quality Ontario worked with a provincial advisory group to select patient relations indicators and associated complaint categories that can be used for quality improvement and reporting. These indicators were refined through pilot testing with 29 organizations including hospitals, community care access centres and long-term care homes. These indicators are now posted on the Health Quality Ontario [website](#) and include specifications that can help organizations with standardizing their patient relations data collection efforts.

Q. Is it mandatory to collect patient relations indicator data or submit indicator data to Health Quality Ontario?

A. Each health sector has relevant sector-specific regulations that outline patient relations expectations. At this time organizations are encouraged to voluntarily collect patient relations data according to Health Quality Ontario's indicator specifications. Where appropriate, organizations may also wish to include one or more of these patient relations indicators within their Quality Improvement Plans.

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Q. What tools does Health Quality Ontario provide to help organizations collect patient relations indicators and improve their patient relation processes?

A. The patient relations indicators and their technical specifications are available on Health Quality Ontario's [website](#). These specifications can be used to standardize complaints data collection across sector organizations in preparation for future public reporting. In the near future, Health Quality Ontario will provide a data entry tool to further support standardized data collection and submission of patient relations data (anticipated in 2018) for eventual comparative facility-level reporting. Additionally, Health Quality Ontario offers [guidance documents](#) for quality improvement in patient relations.

Q. What is the relationship between accreditation standards for complaints handling and patient relations indicators?

A. Accreditation standards are used by organizations to develop and assess their programs and services and to support ongoing quality improvement. Accreditation standards often suggest that organizations have a complaints policy in place, a method to collect complaints information and regularly review what they hear in order to make improvements. The patient relations indicators serve as an example of the type of complaints data organizations may wish to collect and monitor for trends in order to support quality improvement.

Q. Where can I find more information on patient relations activities?

A. Additional patient relations information is available on our [website](#), which highlights the work done to date and next steps. Health Quality Ontario's website also includes [patient engagement resources](#) to support improved patient relations across health sector organizations. For additional inquiries please contact pt_rel@hqontario.ca.