



Provincial Council for Children's Health

Provincial Maternal-Newborn Advisory Committee

Access to Services Work Group

Terms of Reference

Background / Context

Building a brighter future for children begins by ensuring a good start to life, with access to appropriate levels of care for mothers and newborns in Ontario. We require an integrated and coordinated provincial system of maternal and neonatal services capable of delivering timely, equitable, accessible, high quality, evidence-based, family-centred care in an efficient and effective manner.

The Issue

Demand for maternal-newborn services is expected to increase. This growing demand places increasing pressure on the already stressed specialized maternal and newborn care system. Many Level III Obstetrical Units and Neonatal Intensive Care Units (NICUs) are operating at levels that do not allow for accommodation of surges resulting in high risk pregnant women and the most fragile neonates being transferred out-of-region or out-of-country for care.

In June, 2006 the Specialized Paediatric Coordinating Council (SPCC) established a Steering Committee to oversee a review of the capacity of Ontario's eight Level III NICUs at the request of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC). This process was initiated because of an increasing concern, by both hospitals and the MOHLTC, that the Level III centres were operating at occupancy levels which were too high to manage care requirements.

The Level III NICU capacity review was deliberately very narrow in focus. There were, however, a number of important system issues that surfaced during the Steering Committee deliberations. The Steering Committee included these issues in their recommendations:

1. Information to inform planning and policy :
 - The number of Level I, II or III infants in the system
 - Implementation of Phase II of the Perinatal Surveillance Proposal which recommends integration of the existing databases such as neonatal follow-up and neonatal transport into the Niday Perinatal Database
 - Standardization of information related to maternal and neonatal transfers within and out of the province

2. Lack of access to appropriately resourced Level II neonatal care and to high risk perinatal beds
3. Specialized Services:
 - Inconsistent access to high quality transportation services
 - Lack of timely, equitable access to high quality screening and treatment for Retinopathy of Prematurity
 - Lack of timely and equitable access to fetal fibronectin testing

Workgroup Purpose

To assemble experts in the area of Family Medicine, Midwifery, Neonatology, Paediatrics, Perinatology and administrators in order to recommend to the Provincial Council for Children's Health strategies to achieve a coordinated system of maternal and newborn services that will provide equitable access to timely, high quality, evidence-based, family-centred care at the appropriate level for all pregnant women and newborns in Ontario.

Objectives

- i. To provide clear, measurable definitions for Level I, II, Advanced II, Modified Level III and III neonatal units and Level I, II and III OBS Units that will result in:
 - A standardized scope of service according to designation
 - Standardized admission criteria according to designation
 - Standardized resource requirements according to designation
- ii. To evaluate current system capabilities by identifying any existing gaps between individual unit designations and the actual scope of service provided by the unit 24/7
- iii. To recommend strategies for aligning obstetrical and neonatal levels of care within organizations
- iv. To recommend strategies for designating mothers and newborns by level of care requirement and for capturing data about patient volumes by level of care requirement for planning purposes
- v. To describe, in detail, how/where the Level I, II, and III OB units, Level I, II, Advanced II, Modified III and III NICUs and NICU follow-up programs do and do not operate as a provincial system
- vi. To provide recommendations to promote the Level I, II, and III OB units, Level I, II, Advanced II, Modified III and III NICUs and NICU follow-up programs operating as a provincial system

Membership

The Work Group membership will be transdisciplinary and the following areas of expertise will be represented:

- Administration
- CritiCall
- Family Medicine
- Midwifery
- Neonatology
- Nursing
- Paediatrics
- Perinatology
- LHINs

Reporting Relationship

The Access to Services Work Group will report to the Provincial Maternal-Newborn Advisory Committee of the Provincial Council for Children's Health.

Frequency of Meetings

TBD, mostly via teleconference

Timeframe

September 2008 to March 2009

Decision-Making Process

Members share accountability for decisions. There should be open and direct communication based on honesty, respect and transparency, to ensure that all perspectives are heard. Decisions should be evidence or most-promising practice based. Decisions will be made by consensus whenever possible.