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MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT BRINGING BETTER LOCAL MANAGEMENT TO HEALTH INFORMATION

Health care system managers and decision-makers need accurate, consistent and comprehensive information to allocate resources effectively and ensure high-quality patient care. A number of recent studies have found a wide variation in the acute inpatient clinical data collected by hospitals in Ontario. The quality of this data could be significantly improved through a standardized, consistent approach to data management. Most other provinces have already established data quality committees responsible for managing data at the local level.

The McGuinty government is establishing 14 Local Data Management Partnerships to enhance the health system's capacity to manage information and address data quality issues. These partnerships will bring together health information managers and health care providers from each of the newly-created Local Health Integration Networks across Ontario. Together, they will identify best practices, tools and policies that can be used to consolidate local data management processes.

This initiative is part of the government's Information Management Strategy, which is focused on producing better data, supporting accountability and quality improvement.

The objectives of the partnerships will be to:

- Make local data management processes more effective and efficient
- Improve the timeliness and quality of data
- Make more effective use of scarce health information management resources
- Encourage health care providers to adopt best practices.

The partnerships will be implemented in four phases, over a two-year period. Each phase will address a different area within the scope of activities related to health data management:

Phase I – Health records/health information management functions

Phase II – Financial data management functions

Phase III – Clinical data management functions

Phase IV – Primary care data management functions

A provincial Data Management Council will be responsible for overseeing the four advisory committees that will be created for each phase of the partnerships as follows:

Phase I – Health Records Advisory Committee

Phase II – MIS Steering Committee

Phase III – Clinical Data Advisory Committee

Phase IV – Primary Care Advisory Committee

In Phase I, 14 Local Data Management Partnerships will be established in each of the province's Local Health Integration Networks. Each partnership will include those responsible for health records/health information management from each hospital (e.g., the director of health records) and those responsible for health information management from each CCAC.

A chair for each partnership will sit on the provincial **Health Records Advisory Committee**. The committee will be responsible for recommending best practices and providing direction to the partnerships related to the collection and management of data. A representative from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care will chair this committee. Members will include Local Data Management Partnership chairs, as well as representatives from the various Health Information Management (HIM) programs and associations.

During Phase I, the partnerships will also be supported by the **Physician Documentation Expert Panel** and the **Data Consistency Working Group**.

The Physician Documentation Expert Panel is responsible for addressing documentation issues. The panel was established in September 2005, and is chaired by Dr. Ralph Kern, Assistant Professor of Medicine at the University of Toronto and Neurology Program Director at Mount Sinai Hospital. The panel will evaluate and promote changes to hospital physician education packages, medical school curricula and provincial policies related to chart completion, as well as identify other opportunities for improving chart documentation.

The Data Consistency Working Group will identify and promote opportunities to improve coding consistency and data quality. This group will include representatives from the partnerships and from organizations that use the data for purposes such as research and analysis.

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