

Let's Make Healthy
Change Happen.



Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) Narrative for Health Care Organizations in Ontario



St. Thomas Elgin
General Hospital

2026-2027

This document is intended to provide health care organizations in Ontario with guidance as to how they can develop a Quality Improvement Plan. While much effort and care has gone into preparing this document, this document should not be relied on as legal advice and organizations should consult with their legal, governance and other relevant advisors as appropriate in preparing their quality improvement plans. Furthermore, organizations are free to design their own public quality improvement plans using alternative formats and contents, provided that they submit a version of their quality improvement plan to Health Quality Ontario (if required) in the format described herein.

ontario.ca/excellentcare

Overview

St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital (STEGH) is most proud of the people who bring its mission to life every day, its dedicated employees, physicians, and volunteers. Their unwavering commitment to exemplary care forms the foundation of the hospital's reputation and strengthens the trust the community places in STEGH. Across every department and role, staff consistently demonstrate a deep sense of responsibility to the patients and families they serve, often going above and beyond to ensure compassionate, timely, and high-quality care.

STEGH is equally proud of its strong and vibrant organizational culture. The hospital's core values of Respect, Collaboration, Innovation, Compassion, and Accountability are woven into daily practice and reflected in every interaction. These values are not simply statements; they are lived authentically by staff who support one another, embrace new ideas, and work together to improve the patient experience. Whether introducing innovative approaches, collaborating across disciplines, or offering comfort during challenging moments, STEGH's people integrate these values into every aspect of their work.

This shared culture is strengthened by STEGH's ongoing commitment to operating as a LEAN organization. With a continuous focus on quality improvement, staff are empowered to identify opportunities to enhance care, streamline processes, and reduce waste. LEAN thinking is embedded in daily operations, supporting problem-solving at the front line and ensuring that improvements are meaningful, sustainable, and aligned with patient needs. This disciplined approach to improvement reinforces STEGH's dedication to safety, efficiency, and value for the community.

Together, STEGH's people, values, and LEAN culture form a powerful foundation that shapes the hospital's identity and amplifies its impact. Rooted in purpose, integrity, and genuine care, STEGH continues to evolve and strengthen its service to the community it proudly serves.

Access and Flow

STEGH continues to improve patient access and flow by ensuring people receive the right care, in the right place, at the right time. The hospital remains a provincial leader in Emergency Department performance; currently ranking 1st place out of 75 hospitals in Ontario through the Pay-for-Performance program. This reflects STEGH's focus on timely assessment, efficient processes, and coordinated care across teams. STEGH also ranks first in the province for the time between the decision to admit a patient and their transfer to an inpatient bed, highlighting strong collaboration between clinical and support services across the building.

To further support patient flow and system readiness, STEGH recently completed a comprehensive review of its bed management and surge policy. This updated approach has been tested throughout the winter months as the hospital managed seasonal pressures. Surge capacity beds have also been co-located to support more efficient operations, clearer communication, and improved workflow for physicians and nursing staff.

In addition, STEGH took a proactive approach to emergency preparedness by conducting a tabletop exercise to test its outbreak policy. Using a seasonal respiratory scenario, STEGH simulated its response to a potential outbreak and assessed its ability to maintain safe, effective operations under pressure. Staff, leaders, and key stakeholders participated in the exercise, helping to identify strengths, refine processes, and reinforce organizational readiness.

These efforts reflect STEGH's continued leadership in access, flow, and preparedness, helping ensure people across our region receive timely, appropriate care when they need it most.

Equity and Indigenous Health

STEGH remains committed to advancing health equity and supporting Indigenous health by building meaningful relationships, listening to community voices, and taking action to create a more inclusive and culturally safe environment. Over the past year, the hospital has participated in Indigenous community events, maintaining a visible and respectful presence while creating opportunities to learn directly from Indigenous partners. These experiences have helped inform STEGH's ongoing review of patient care policies to better reflect Indigenous perspectives across the organization.

As a visible symbol of allyship, STEGH has installed an outdoor mural featuring the medicine wheel. The artwork serves as a public expression of the hospital's commitment to Indigenous health and cultural safety, while also creating a welcoming space for patients, families, staff, and community members.

STEGH has also advanced this work through a collaborative environmental scan completed with the Southwest Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Centre (SOAHAC). This partnership supported the identification of service gaps for Indigenous patients and highlighted opportunities to strengthen culturally appropriate care, patient relations, and support.

In addition, STEGH recently welcomed the Elgin Ontario Health Team's new Indigenous Health Lead to the organization. This partnership will play an important role in guiding future initiatives, strengthening relationships, and ensuring that Indigenous health equity remains a priority across all programs and services.

This work demonstrates STEGH's continued commitment to building trust, strengthening collaboration, and advancing more equitable health outcomes for indigenous communities.

Patient/Client/Resident Experience

STEGH continues to prioritize the patient experience as a core element of its strategic plan, recognizing that meaningful feedback from patients and families is essential to driving quality improvement. To strengthen its ability to listen, learn, and act on patient insights, STEGH recently onboarded the Qualtrics survey platform. This enhanced system allows the hospital to collect more robust, real-time feedback and to participate in a provincial benchmarking process that compares patient experience results with 28 other hospitals. This comparison enables STEGH to identify both strengths and opportunities for improvement with greater clarity.

Early patient experience results highlight strong performance in key priority areas across the Emergency Department and inpatient settings. For example, in the Emergency Department, 90% of patients reported that communication about care between physicians, nurses, and other staff was good, reflecting effective interprofessional collaboration and clear information sharing. In inpatient care, 98% of patients reported being able to get help from hospital staff when they needed attention, demonstrating a high level of responsiveness to patient needs. Additionally, 87% of inpatients reported receiving the information they needed about their condition and treatment, reinforcing STEGH's commitment to clear communication and patient centered care.

STEGH also benefits from a highly engaged Patient Family Advisory Council (PFAC), which meets monthly to provide direct feedback on recent care experiences. The PFAC reviews policies, operational protocols, and improvement initiatives to ensure they reflect the needs and expectations of patients and families. The PFAC Chair also holds a seat at the Board of Directors table, ensuring patient voices directly inform governance and strategic decision-making.

Based on patient experience results and feedback, STEGH will continue to focus on improving how informed patients feel about their discharge plan and the clarity of information they receive about their care. This work remains a key priority for quality improvement in the year ahead.

Provider Experience

STEGH is committed to strengthening staff retention and recruitment by fostering a workplace culture that prioritizes wellbeing, professional growth, and recognition. Through meaningful employee engagement, development opportunities, and support for work-life balance, we create an environment where staff feel valued and equipped to deliver exceptional care. Innovation is central to STEGH's mission. More than 1,000 staff, 80 volunteers and 150 students form the foundation of our success. By embedding *Just Culture* principles, leadership development, and clinical coaching, we promote accountability, compassion, and continuous improvement. This dedication to workforce excellence was recognized with the 2025 *People and Culture Award* from the London Chamber of Commerce.

STEGH's continuous quality improvement program includes LEAN training and opportunities to enhance patient care. In 2025, the STEGH Sparks program showcased innovative staff-led projects to the Board of Directors and Foundation Board.

The 2025 Global Workforce Survey, completed by 65% of staff, affirmed strong performance in patient engagement, quality improvement, resource availability, training, and diversity and inclusion.

STEGH continues to involve staff and physicians in equipment planning and workspace design while providing enhanced support for clinical documentation, particularly for Internationally Educated Nurses.

Employee wellness remains a priority, supported through mindfulness and fitness activities, a dedicated serenity space, and the introduction of weekend stretching and onsite massage.

STEGH upholds a strong commitment to innovation, collaboration, and continuous improvement that supports a positive work environment.

Safety

STEGH remains strongly committed to preventing never events and advancing a culture of safety across the organization. As part of this year's Quality Improvement Plan, STEGH is investing in enhanced wound-care education for a minimum of ten nurses. This initiative will form the foundation of a new Wound Care Champion program, with champions embedded across clinical areas to expand organizational expertise. The program is designed to build internal leaders with advanced wound-care competency, increase the capacity of nursing staff, and strengthen the quality of wound assessment, prevention, and management. By addressing knowledge gaps and supporting continuous learning, STEGH aims to ensure that evidence-based wound-care practices are consistently applied at the point of care.

In addition to this work, STEGH continues to prioritize its *Movement Matters* program, which focuses on preventing deconditioning in frail seniors during hospitalization. By promoting early and frequent mobility, the program supports patient strength, independence, and readiness for discharge, ultimately improving outcomes and reducing the risk of functional decline.

Medication safety also remains a central organizational priority. Closed-loop medication scanning continues to be monitored closely by the Quality and Safety Committee of the Board, with STEGH maintaining strong performance and building on its current scan rate of 94%. Ongoing efforts aim to further strengthen compliance and ensure that medication administration processes remain reliable, standardized, and safe.

Together, these initiatives reflect STEGH's commitment to high-quality, patient-centred care and its proactive approach to reducing preventable harm across the hospital.

Palliative Care

STEGH integrates high-quality palliative care throughout the illness trajectory to support patients with life-limiting conditions and their families. Guided by the Palliative Care Quality Standard and the Palliative Care Health Services Delivery Framework, STEGH focuses on early identification, coordinated care, and compassionate support that enhances comfort, dignity, and quality of life.

One key activity is STEGH's interdisciplinary palliative approach embedded across clinical programs. Physicians, nurses, social workers, and allied health professionals collaborate to ensure timely symptom management, psychosocial support, and clear communication about goals of care. This reflects the Quality Standard's emphasis on coordinated, person-centred care planning.

A second major initiative is STEGH's work in advance care planning and end-of-life discussions. Staff engage patients and families early in conversations about values, preferences, and treatment options. To support this, STEGH co-developed a comprehensive palliative care brochure with patient and family partners. The brochure helps patients and families understand palliative medicine, what to expect regarding pain and symptom management, and how the care team supports decision-making based on individual values, wishes, and beliefs. This resource strengthens shared decision-making and ensures information is accessible and compassionate.

A third example is STEGH's commitment to flexible visiting practices that recognize essential caregivers as integral care partners. STEGH ensures that essential caregivers can be present with palliative patients whenever possible, supporting

emotional well-being, shared decision-making, and continuity of care. This approach aligns with the Quality Standard's requirement to honour patient preferences, support families, and provide holistic, compassionate care.

Through these initiatives, STEGH ensures that palliative care is integrated throughout the patient journey, improving comfort, reducing distress, and supporting families with respect and dignity.

Population Health Management

STEGH is committed to advancing population health by partnering with community organizations to better understand and respond to the unique health and social needs of the people it serves. Guided by population health management principles, STEGH works collaboratively to design proactive, person-centred supports that improve health outcomes across the continuum of care.

A key partnership has been STEGH's strengthened relationship with Inn Out of the Cold in St. Thomas. Recognizing that many patients face housing insecurity at the time of discharge, STEGH works closely with this organization to support safe transitions for individuals without stable housing. This collaboration ensures that vulnerable patients receive coordinated support, reducing the risk of readmission and helping them access shelter, food, and social services during a critical period.

To further support individuals with complex mental health, addiction, and social needs, STEGH has partnered with the St. Thomas Police Service to expand the Mobile Outreach Support Team (MOST). Beginning in February 2026, a STEGH nurse joined the existing police and Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) team to provide clinical expertise during community outreach. This integrated model allows for earlier intervention, improved crisis response, and more seamless connections to hospital and community care.

STEGH also continues to collaborate with the Elgin Ontario Health Team's new Indigenous Health Lead to advance Indigenous health equity priorities. This partnership supports culturally safe care, strengthens relationships with Indigenous communities, and ensures that population-level planning reflects Indigenous perspectives and needs.

Through these partnerships, STEGH is building a more connected, equitable, and responsive system of care for the community.

Quality Improvement and Emergency Department Return Visit Quality Program

STEGH maintains a strong commitment to quality and performance in its Emergency Department, with a sustained focus that has resulted in consistently strong performance across Pay-for-Results (P4R) metrics. The hospital continues to rank among the top-performing hospitals in the province, reflecting its dedication to timely, safe, and effective emergency care. Over the past year, STEGH implemented two strategic initiatives aimed at further enhancing P4R outcomes, with particular attention to improving patient access to physician resources and ensuring timely follow-up of outstanding laboratory and diagnostic imaging results.

The first initiative expanded the physician-at-triage role. Post-implementation analysis demonstrated improved timeliness of physician assessment and ordering, confirming effective integration into ED workflows. This work also highlighted opportunities for further process optimization, particularly in the context of ongoing health human resource pressures.

The second initiative introduced ED nursing telephone follow-up for patients with outstanding diagnostic imaging or laboratory results. This process strengthens communication with patients who have left the ED but may require additional instructions or clarification, particularly high-acuity, non-admitted patients. Audits confirmed consistent completion of calls and improved communication of results and care instructions.

Following a review of ED return-visit quality data, STEGH has identified a new quality-improvement initiative focused on optimizing access and processes for the Triage Rapid Access Physician role. Planned improvements include early identification and tracking of appropriate patients, reliable processes to return patients to the "to be seen" list when ongoing care is required, alignment of physician and nursing resources during peak times, and enhanced education on workflow expectations and escalation pathways.

This initiative is expected to improve physician assessment times for high-acuity, non-admitted patients and reduce the number of patients who leave without being seen, further strengthening STEGH's commitment to exceptional emergency care.

Executive Compensation

Under the Excellent Care for All Act, 2010, organizations are required to link executive compensation to the achievement of quality improvement priorities. In alignment with this requirement, STEGH has attached 3.5 percent of executive compensation to the 2026/27 Quality Improvement Plan for each executive. This applies to the Chief Executive Officer, Chief Nursing Executive, Vice President of People Services, Chief Information Officer, and Chief Financial Officer.

Each executive is accountable for supporting and advancing the Quality Improvement Plan initiatives that align with STEGH's strategic priorities. The chart below outlines how executive compensation is tied to defined QIP indicators for the 2026/27 cycle, ensuring clear accountability, transparency, and alignment between leadership performance and organizational quality outcomes.

Indicator area	Indicator type	Planned Improvement	Change Plan Methods	Metric Targets	% of Executive Compensation Attached
Safety	Recommended	Strengthening delirium identification and management through an interdisciplinary care approach.	Providing focused education to physicians and nurses to enhance delirium screening, coding accuracy, and care management	The identified process measures will be implemented by December 2026	1% Exec. Compensation
Safety	Recommended	Increase supports to staff experiencing workplace violence (WPV)	Use psychological-safety practices for timely debriefs and leader training to support teams after WPV events.	The identified process measures will be implemented by December 2026	.5% Exec. Compensation
Safety	Custom	Advance multisector efforts to identify and manage opioid use disorder	Introduce Sublocade as a treatment option for patients with opioid use disorder	The identified process measures will be implemented by December 2026	1% Exec. Compensation
Safety	Custom	Develop internal wound care leaders with advanced wound care competency	The Wound Care Champion program enhances nursing skills in wound assessment, prevention, and management	The identified process measures will be implemented by December 2026	1% Exec. Compensation

This approach reinforces STEGH's commitment to continuous improvement, strengthens executive ownership of quality and safety initiatives, and ensures that leadership efforts remain focused on delivering high-quality, patient-centred care for the community.

Contact Information/Designated Lead

Our organization is committed to fostering a culture of transparency, collaboration, and shared learning. We welcome opportunities to connect with others who wish to learn more about the initiatives and activities outlined in our Quality Improvement Plan. For inquiries or further discussion, please contact:

Craig W. Watkin Vice President of Patient Care and Chief Nursing Executive craig.watkin@stegh.on.ca

Sign-Off

It is recommended that the following individuals (where applicable) review, approve, and sign-off on your organization's quality improvement plan:

Board Chair  (signature)

Board Quality Committee Chair  (signature)

Chief Executive Officer  (signature)

EDRVQP lead  (signature)