

Practice #16: French-Language Placements to Prepare for Serving a Francophone Minority Community's Francophone Clientele (Ontario)

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Practice #16: French-Language Placements to Prepare for Serving a Francophone Minority Community's Francophone Clientele (Ontario)

This practice contributes to improving:

- An organization's resources: hiring, retaining and training bilingual health personnel;
- Professionals' awareness of active offer.

The organization implementing this practice:

The Groupe de recherche sur la formation professionnelle en santé et service social en contexte francophone minoritaire (GReFoPS), in collaboration with the Interprofessional Rehabilitation Clinic, University of Ottawa.

The information contained in this file was mainly acquired from an in-person interview conducted on February 28, 2018, with Jacinthe Savard, a researcher with the Groupe de recherche sur la formation et les pratiques en santé et service social en contexte francophone minoritaire. It was complemented by documentary research, and these sources are cited as references.

Background

Students who opt for a career in healthcare consider several factors when the time comes for them to choose a program of study (proximity to their home, admission requirements, financial assistance opportunities, etc.). Therefore, Francophone or bilingual students do not always choose to study in French. As a result, during their studies, they may learn very little about field-specific French vocabulary and resources available in French. In addition, they may have very few opportunities to network with other Francophone professionals and organizations in minority communities.

Between 2015 and 2017, the GReFoPS led a research project to evaluate, enhance and disseminate a model of clinical training intended to prepare bilingual students enrolled in English programs to provide services in French.

Objectives

For organizations that deliver health and social services, welcoming a trainee who can provide services in French allowed them to:

- 1) Provide services in French to their Francophone clientele;
- 2) Enhance the preparation of prospective health professionals who will be able to offer French-language services in minority language contexts;
- 3) Facilitate the recruitment of future professionals able to provide services in French.

The GReFoPS-led project aimed to arrange for clinical placements in French for Francophone or Francophile students enrolled in one of the English health programs offered by universities in various Canadian provinces outside of Quebec. It can be adapted to other linguistic minority context situations.

It is expected that these placements improve readiness among future health professionals and facilitate the integration of health professionals who can speak French in Francophone minority communities (FMCs). For trainees, the objectives were to:

- Minimize their feeling of linguistic insecurity by having the opportunity to learn and practise field-specific vocabulary in French;
- Increase their knowledge of available resources in French and their ability to adapt these resources in a Francophone minority community (FMC); and
- Start to build a network of Francophone professional contacts working in FMCs that they will be able to refer to once they are in the workforce, whether as professional support (discussing resources related to their care offer) or as personal support (sharing the difficulties encountered, peer support).

Features of the practice

Between 2015 and 2017, 18 trainees from Anglophone educational institutions able to speak French completed a placement in French at the University of Ottawa's Interprofessional Rehabilitation Clinic.

Key components of the practice are as follows:

- Placement preparation by communication between the placement setting and the educational institution's coordinator of clinical training to identify a student able to speak French in the required field and to establish a formal placement agreement.
- Communicating with the student to define the desired level of language proficiency and mutual expectations.
- Welcoming the student: Along with an onsite orientation, students received a short training on the challenges of providing services in French.
- Support to working in French throughout the placement; a supervisor who is open, fostering a trusting environment where the student can progress; documents available in French; pairing the trainee with Francophone clients during the placement, etc.

Results achieved through this research project led to the creation of two handbooks, one for care providers who would like to welcome a trainee who can speak French, and another for clinical training coordinators. The handbook for care providers proposes a seven-step process to welcome a trainee who can serve a Francophone clientele in a Francophone minority setting. Both handbooks are available in French and in English.¹

Challenges

Students do not always self-identify as bilingual, nor do they necessarily ask for a placement in French. Therefore, it may be difficult to find students that can speak French within the post-secondary institution located in the region. It is recommended to contact the educational institutions' clinical training coordinators and to provide them with a letter of invitation, including a questionnaire aimed at finding students who have some knowledge of French. These resources are provided in the handbook intended for healthcare providers.

¹ The handbook in French is available at: http://www.grefops.ca/guides_fr.html
The handbook in English is available at: http://www.grefops.ca/guides_en.html

In some professional disciplines, placement priority is given to the post-secondary educational institution located in the area. It is possible that no student from a given institution can speak French. In that case, the area's placement coordinator may be asked about the possibility of arranging for a placement in another post-secondary educational institution where a trainee who can speak French can be found.

Analysis²

Why is this practice considered innovative?

This practice meets a need for professionals who can provide services in French by identifying students enrolled in health and social service programs who are able to speak French, and by giving them the opportunity to become familiar with working in a Francophone minority context. The practice was well received by clinical training coordinators from the various participating programs of study. It is also perceived as innovative by organizations in charge of providing health and social services in the official language in a minority setting, such as Health Canada and the Community Health and Social Services Network.

Emerging, promising or leading: A promising practice

- **Quality of evidence:** This practice was the subject of a research project that included data collection from trainees and feedback from those responsible for clinical training.³
- **Impact:** Results from the research project show that students who completed a placement in French subsequently felt more confident when it came to self-identifying as bilingual professionals and providing services in French.
- **Applicability:** The practice described in this file has been implemented by the Interprofessional Rehabilitation Clinic at the University of Ottawa. Another practice with comparable objectives was carried out at the same time in Southern Ontario.⁴ However, components of the implementation were different. Some aspects of this practice are applicable to various Francophone minority organizations hoping to welcome a French-speaking trainee.
- **Transferability:** Handbooks intended for coordinators of clinical training and care providers suggest ways of transferring the experience to other settings. Testimonials about a project implemented in Southern Ontario, with similar objectives, indicate that this practice holds potential for transferability.

² This analysis is based on criteria defined in the *Innovative Practices Evaluation Framework* designed by the Health Council of Canada, available at: https://healthcouncilcanada.ca/files/IP_Framework_Eng_final_1.pdf also outlined in Appendix 1.

³ Savard, J., Benoît, J., Dubouloz, C.J., Breau-Godwin, S. (2018). Des stages en français pour se préparer à travailler auprès des communautés francophones en situation minoritaire. *REFLETS : revue d'intervention sociale et communautaire*, 24 (2), 154-181.

⁴ Réseau Franco-santé du Sud de l'Ontario (n.d.). *Communauté accueillante 2018-2021* Accessed on November 1, 2018 at: <http://francosantesud.ca/meilleures-pratiques/projets/#communaute-accueillante-2018-2021>