

Practice #22: *Sentinelles entre aînés* (pancanadian)

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ABOUT THE FACT SHEET

This fact sheet is part of the *Directory of Innovative Practices in Health and Social Services in Official Language Minority Contexts* (available at: https://www.grefops.ca/directory_innovative_practices.html)

The *Directory of Innovative Practices* (formerly the *Handbook of Innovative Practices on the Integration of Official Language Minority Health and Social Services*) is a complementary resource to the *Organizational and Community Resources Self-Assessment Tool for Active Offer and Social and Health Services Continuity*¹. It presents initiatives that have been put in place, most often at the local level, that respond to a community need and are perceived as innovative by the various actors involved in their implementation. The practices were identified, analyzed and classified according to an evaluation framework developed by the Health Council of Canada. This framework allowed us to distinguish between emerging practices, promising practices and leading practices. Some of these practices were suggested by the *Société Santé en français* and the provincial, territorial and regional French-language health networks, or other partners.

The reader is referred to the [Introduction and Method](#) document for information about the authors and collaborators, background on the project, a description of the methodology used to create the fact sheets, definitions of the following concepts:

- Leading Practice, Promising Practice, Emerging Practice
- Quality of evidence, impact, applicability, transferability
- Service coordination, service integration, liaison
- Active offer

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¹ The self-assessment Tool is available in English and French and can be accessed at the following Web address:
https://www.grefops.ca/selfassessment_tool.html (English version)
https://www.grefops.ca/outil_autoevaluation.html (French version)

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This practice contributes to improving:

- Community resources: the organization's collaboration with key players in the community.

The organization implementing this practice : The Fédération des aînées et aînés francophones du Canada (FAAFC)

The information described in this fact sheet is based on information available on the web pages of several organizations including the Regroupement des aînés de la Nouvelle-Écosse (RANE); the Portail des francophones de Terre-Neuve-et-Labrador (FFTNL); the Fédération des aînés franco-albertains (FAFA) and also the official page of the ConnectAînés program: <https://connectaines.ca/>. The documentation was complemented by a telephone interview with Mr. Stéphane Lapierre, M.Sc. national coordinator at the FAAFC, on April 27, 2021.

Background

Living in an official language minority community is a significant population health challenge, particularly for Francophone seniors². These individuals often face linguistic and social isolation, a lack of resources (especially in rural and remote areas) and a lack of contact with other Francophone seniors. In addition, the National Seniors Council's report on the social isolation of seniors (2014) notes membership in an official language minority community as a factor that can impede seniors' social engagement³.

Objectives

The program entitled “Vers l'inclusion sociale des aînés en situation minoritaire” is an initiative developed by the Fédération des aînées et aînés francophones du Canada (FAAFC), with its members across Canada, with funding from the federal government's New Horizons for Seniors Program⁴. The program aims to increase the social inclusion of seniors in Francophone and Acadian minority communities, mainly through the ConnectAînés and Sentinelles entre aînés initiatives (see fact sheet #21 for a description of ConnectAînés).

² Dupuis-Blanchard, S., Villalon, L., & Alimezelli, H.T. (2014). Vieillir en santé en situation minoritaire linguistique au Canada : enjeux, défis et mobilisation collective. *Global Health Promotion*, vol. 21, supp.1, 70–75. DOI : 10.1177/1757975913512161

Bouchard L, Desmeules M. (2011). *Minorités de langue officielle du Canada : égales devant la santé ?* Québec : Presses de l'Université du Québec.

³ Conseil national des aînés. (2014). *Rapport sur l'isolement social des aînés (2013-2014)*. Gouvernement du Canada. Retrieved on April 23, 2021 from <https://www.canada.ca/fr/conseil-national-aines/programmes/publications-rapports/2014/isolement-social-aines.html>

⁴ Fédération des aînées et aînés francophones du Canada. (2020). *Rapport Annuel 2019-2020*. Fédération des aînées et aînés francophones du Canada. http://www.faaqc.ca/images/rapport/FAAFC_Rapport_Annuel_2019-2020.pdf

To financially support these initiatives and ensure their sustainability, the FAAFC will also develop a conference program called Franc Savoir. This is a French online training program covering a variety of topics, the profits of which will be reinvested in the ConnectAînés and Sentinelles entre aînés programs.

The main objective of the Sentinelles entre aînés⁵ initiative is to break the isolation and ensure the well-being of Francophone seniors through a telephone call service.

Features of the practice

Currently available in 5 provinces and 1 territory across Canada, Sentinelles entre aînés is a way to break isolation through friendly telephone conversations with volunteers trained by the FAAFC and its member associations. Seniors can receive calls and communicate with ease about their loneliness, difficulties they are experiencing or happy moments they wish to share. This free telephone service is designed to support and comfort French-speaking seniors and to ensure that they are not lonely.

Sentinelles volunteers are also trained to refer participants to appropriate resources or services in keeping with their needs and to ensure that they can obtain services in French whenever possible.

Challenges

Given the recent nature of the practice, the main challenges at present are training Sentinelles⁶ volunteers and identifying the most isolated people.

Analysis⁷

Why is this practice considered innovative?

The Sentinelles principle is not new. For example, there are Sentinelles programs in suicide prevention, and in seniors' well-being⁸, but, according to the resource person, such an initiative in a Francophone minority setting is innovative.

Emerging, promising or leading: A leading practice

Quality of evidence: Given the newness of this initiative, it has not yet been formally evaluated. However, a self-assessment is included in the quarterly project progress reports submitted to funders.

⁵ <https://sentinellesentreaines.ca/>

⁶ Magny, A. (2020, March 15). Prendre d'assaut l'isolement des aînés. l-express.ca. <https://l-express.ca/prendre-dassaut-l-isolement-des-aines/>

⁷ 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 and also outlined in the Introduction and Method document.

⁸ <https://www.lesoleil.com/actualite/situation-des-aines-des-sentinelles-pour-contrer-les-abus-c9c557962afb60782fcd4c43a1127a45>

Impact: At this time, the Sentinelles entre aînés site does not maintain official statistics regarding call service registration and participation. A new online system will eventually provide the statistical data needed to assess service usage and to record the number of volunteers. Informal feedback suggests that this initiative is an easy way to break the isolation of Francophone seniors in minority situations and to ensure their well-being.

Applicability: This initiative is being implemented in five (5) provinces: British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Newfoundland and Labrador and New Brunswick, and in one territory: Yukon. The practice implementation is possible through the federations of Francophone seniors in these different regions. The *Fédération des aînées et des aînés francophones du Canada* (FAAFC) and provincial and territory Francophone partner federations are actively involved in practice dissemination.

Transferability: We are not aware of any such initiatives for other minority language communities, but informal evaluations and observations of Sentinelles entre aînés suggest that the initiative could easily be adapted to other contexts.