

Implementing the Seniors Mental Health Policy Lens

Department of Health and Community Services
Newfoundland and Labrador

Health and Community Services, NL

(context)

- Health and social services merged
- Province divided into 4 regional health authorities
- All health services fully integrated
(acute; community; long term care)

Health and Community Services, NL

(context, cont'd)

- Government practice to write ***strategy documents*** setting out broad key directions and strategies to guide policy, program / services development and funding, and multi-sectoral collaboration
- **Examples:**
 - Mental Health and Addictions Framework
 - Poverty Reduction Strategy
 - Provincial Healthy Aging Policy Framework

Applying the Policy Lens

- 2 new HCS strategy documents ‘under construction’ (early stages of development)
 - **Chronic Disease Prevention and Management Strategy**
 - **Chronic Pain Management**

Applying the Policy Lens (cont'd)

- **Who was involved:**

- Primary author of the draft strategy
- Interested advisory committee members

- **The Process:**

- Approached individuals to discuss the task, invite participation and set meeting time
- Circulated SMHPL and copy of draft strategy to be reviewed in advance of meeting.

What We Learned

- The broader / higher level the initiative being evaluated, the more challenging it is to apply all aspects of the SMHPL
- Timing of the exercise is a consideration - early application of the Lens suggests considerations for focus groups, consultations, and other involvement during the writing/review of the drafts

What We Learned (cont'd)

- Application of the Lens stretches the thinking – not only regarding seniors and mental health, but in other areas as well.
- Lens application enriched and diversified discussion on both content and process issues.

Action Prompted by Lens Activity

- *Strategy* authors made some significant and valuable content additions to their draft documents as a result of the exercise
- The exercise prompted authors to re-evaluate representation in their advisory networks.
- We have added the SMHPL to our provincial implementation plan as an action item for one of our strategies related to older adults.

Value of the SMHPL

- Enriches content
- Strengthens process
- Raises awareness re seniors and mental health
- Expands focus beyond seniors; mental health
- Promotes inclusive thinking / policy development
- Encourages inclusion of new partners for consultation, thus leading to a richer discussion