

BASIC PRINCIPLES OF

HEALTH SERVICE INTEGRATION

Delivery of health care services is complex and requires an innovative approach tailored to community needs; as a result, there is no single definitive model of integration that is appropriate for all organizations and situations. The World Health Organization (WHO) describes integration as *"the management and delivery of health services so that clients receive a continuum of preventive and curative services, according to their needs over time and across different levels of the health system."* With this in mind, decision makers can use the following principles in the development of appropriate strategies for planning and implementing successfully integrated health care systems:

COMPREHENSIVE



Integrated health systems take responsibility to plan for, provide, and coordinate all core services along the continuum of health for the population served.

.....

These services include primary care through tertiary care as well as cooperation between health and social services to coordinate efforts across sectors.

CLIENT-FOCUSED



Integrated health systems place the patient/client at the centre of their operations.

.....

A client-focused approach encourages active participation by the client and their family or informal caregivers. Listening and responding to the needs of specific populations and communities is key.

STANDARDIZED CARE



Shared protocols based on evidence are key to the functioning of interprofessional teams and serve as an important element of integrated health services.

Practice guidelines are meant to standardize care across services and sites, with the aim of enhancing the quality of care.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT



Integrated health systems have well-developed performance monitoring systems, including indicators to measure outcomes at different levels.

Continuous measurement of care outcomes and reporting are fundamental parts of the quality improvement process.

INFORMATION SYSTEMS



Quality information systems strengthen communication capacity and information flow across integrated pathways.

Data management through an electronic system allows for collection, tracking, and reporting of information such as population demographics and needs, use of services, and client experience.

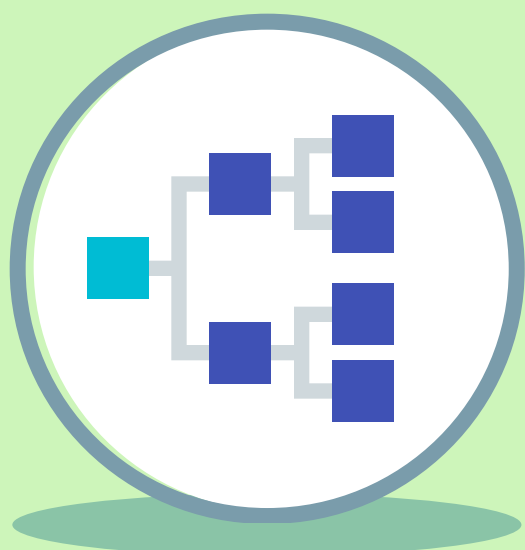
LEADERSHIP



An integrated health system calls for leadership with vision as well as organizational culture consistent with this vision.

Bringing different cultures together requires dedicated leadership with clear communication processes.

GOVERNANCE



Governance should be diversified, ensuring representation from a variety of stakeholder groups. Diverse governing bodies contribute different perspectives and knowledge, and are able to understand how health care is delivered along its continuum.

Executive directors and those with experience-based knowledge can help ensure consistency between aims, visions, and goals among management and governance.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT



Financial management is often connected with performance monitoring in integrated health systems. Some systems have implemented tools that support financial and clinical decision-making at the service level.

The overall goal is to provide the most cost-effective care in the most appropriate location.

References:

- Coddington, D. C., Ackerman, F. K., Jr., & Moore, K. D. (2001a). Integrated health care systems: Major issues and lessons learned. *Healthcare Leadership & Management Report*, 9, 1-9.
- Suter, Oelke, Adair, et al. (2007). Health Systems Integration. *Alberta Health Services*. Retrieved from: <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/res/if-res-hswru-hs-integration-report-2007.pdf>
- Heyeres M, McCalman J, Tsey K and Kinchin I (2016). The Complexity of Health Service Integration: A Review of Reviews. *Front. Public Health* 4:223. doi: 10.3389/fpubh.2016.00223
- Simoens, S. & Scott, A. (2005). Integrated primary care organizations: To what extent is integration occurring and why? *Health Services Management Research*, 18, 25-40.
- Wilson, B., Rogowski, D., & Popplewell, R. (2003). Integrated services pathways (ISP): A best practice model. *Australian Health Review*, 26, 43-51.
- World Health Organization. (2015). *People-Centred and Integrated Health Services: An Overview of the Evidence: Interim Report*. Geneva: WHO Document Production Services.
- World Health Organization. (2016). *Integrated Health Services – What and Why? Technical Brief No.1*. Department of Health Policy Development and Services. Available from: http://www.who.int/healthsystems/technical_brief_final.pdf
- Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario. (2017). Youth Wellness Hubs Ontario: A Primer. Retrieved from: https://youthhubs.ca/wp-content/themes/ywo/assets/files/YWHO_Primer_FINAL.pdf