

## Public Health Nursing Leadership in Ontario

### Creating a New Association

New organizations are created from passion, ideals, and opportunity. These are the drivers of the creation of a new organization for nursing leaders in public health in Ontario.

The Association of Nursing Directors and Supervisors of Official Health Agencies (ANDSOOHA) and the Ontario Public Health Chief Nursing Officers association (OPHCNO) have identified a strategic imperative to come together into one new Association in order to create a compelling and strategic voice for public health nursing leadership, now and into the future.

#### **Background**

ANDSOOHA has a long and rich history in public health nursing in Ontario and has been in existence for more than 60 years. It was created to support nursing administration within public health units with the following mission:

***To promote excellence in public health nursing administration and practice and to provide a unified voice for public health nursing managers in Ontario.***

The Chief Nursing Officer role was launched on October 2011. Health Units are required to have a designated CNO role with the responsibilities to:

- ***Provide nursing practice quality assurance and continuous quality improvement***
- ***Provide nursing leadership***
- ***Support organizational effectiveness***

In order to leverage the potential of the CNO role, the OPHCNO network was created with the vision:

***To provide strategic public health nursing leadership to help shape a healthy Ontario***

#### **The Path towards a new Association**

As evidenced by their strategic objectives, both ANDSOOHA and OPHCNO are striving to position public health and public health nursing as strategic and influential thought leaders in relation to the social determinants of health, as well as community-based and population health within the broader health system in Ontario.

The Executives of ANDSOOHA and OPHCNO have identified that in order to be strategic and influential leaders in health, they must first come together as one association in order to leverage the full potential of their leadership. The Executives of ANDSOOHA and OPHCNO met twice, once in November 2013 and again in March

2014 to discuss the possibility of combining into one Association. They identified the following benefits of collaboration for public health nursing leadership in Ontario:

- Speak as one voice for population health needs
- Be recognized as thought leaders
- Speak to and influence policy development
- Support nursing practice excellence in the public health system
- Develop and name content experts in areas specific to public health issues
- Articulate the contribution of public health nursing to population health

The membership of both ANDSOOHA and OPHCNO were asked to comment on the relative importance the benefits listed above through an on-line survey sent out July 7 2014 and the results indicate support of the benefits. Of the fifty-eight responses, the majority of respondents ranked the perceived benefits as being either important or very important.

Through the survey, the membership were also asked to comment of what they value in their current organization. Themes that were seen in the survey include:

- A credible and acknowledged space for the CNOs to come together in order to leverage the potential of the role to contribute to the public health system
- Regular and planned opportunities for the regional groups and peers to come together to learn and share knowledge
- Opportunities to influence policy through connection with other public health organizations
- Administrative and operational discussions to support management and nurse leadership development

Members were also consulted through regional teleconferences organized by the ANDSOOHA Regional representatives and held between August 21<sup>st</sup> and September 8<sup>th</sup>. Seventeen health units and 33 people participated on the calls.

Members endorsed the benefits overall and had the following comments:

- Emphasize nursing leadership as well as the impact of leadership overall on the improved effectiveness of the public health system and enhanced nursing practice for improved health of Ontario communities
- Ensure that management and the support to new managers through networking, access to resources and the annual conference is reflected.
- Clarify the term "population health", ensure that it encompasses all population groups served by public health and showcases the positive influence of nursing on the health of the population.
- Expand on the term "thought leadership" to reflect the concepts of informed opinion leaders and acknowledged field experts
- Link the Association to nurse educators

- Ensure there are opportunities and mechanisms for members to share diverse opinions and capitalize on the strength of many voices
- Assess the pros and cons of adding new membership classes i.e. nursing practice leads (NPL) , managers who manage nurses but are not nurses themselves and public health nurses (PHNs)

Members had questions about how the executive will be elected. They indicated that they wanted to participate actively in the transition. There was a suggestion that the new association would benefit from having a staff resource similar to OPHA.

While some CNOs participated on the regional ANDSOOHA calls, a separate teleconference was also held with CNOs. Fourteen CNOs participated. CNOs reinforced the importance for them to meet together as a group to ensure that they have a forum continue to develop and use the influence of the CNO role to benefit the public health system and the health of Ontarians in partnership with the MOHLTC.

They also emphasised the importance of finding a place for the NPL in the new association.

### **Developing the Association**

A modernized structure for a new Association includes:

- A new name that reflects public health nursing leadership
- Revisions to the mission, vision and goals that reflect both knowledge based and results based approaches
- A revised governance structure
- A semi open membership structure
- Planned collaborations with stakeholders
- A future oriented work plan that positions nursing leadership as integral to public health excellence

The structure of the new Association will be set out in the renewed Constitution. The Executives of ANDSOOHA and OPHCNO made the decision that the new Association will be built from the ANDSOOHA constitution because there is an existing framework. The content however will change and will reflect the vision of the new combined Association.

### **Timeline and Next Steps**

Facilitated discussions with ANDSOOHA regional groups have taken place and themes from the discussions have informed the next draft version of the Constitution and the potential structure of the new Association.

Between Oct 1<sup>st</sup> 2014 and the special meeting to be held no later than the end of June 2015, a transition plan and Team will move the work plan forward in preparation for the membership vote on the new Association.

