



2024
CLIENT
VOICE
REPORT

VHA Home HealthCare
Creating More Independence



EMBEDDING CLIENT VOICE IN ALL WE DO

Sandra Li-James Vice President, Quality, Best Practice and Education, Chief Nursing Executive and Co-Chair of Client & Carer Advisory Council (left) and Stacey Ryan Client and Family Voice Specialist (right)

In 2024, VHA client partners continued to be vital in driving quality improvements, from shaping our strategic plan, contributing to our Accreditation Canada evaluation, and developing our Client Engagement Framework among other initiatives. Their invaluable insights and lived experiences guided the development of a forward-thinking strategic plan that not only addresses emerging challenges but also capitalizes on new opportunities, ensuring our organization remains well-positioned to provide spectacular care to clients and carers.

Through their unwavering commitment and sharing, client partners have profoundly influenced our work, inspiring lasting growth and excellence. Their partnership has set an example of how our collective leadership and collaboration can ensure that we continue to evolve our care, quality and service delivery.

The energy and passion they brought to every meeting, project, and discussion were truly inspiring, pushing us to focus on what matters, to aim higher and do better. This collaborative spirit has strengthened our team and reaffirmed the importance of listening, learning, and innovating together.

We are deeply grateful for the transformative impact our client partners have made. Their dedication and vision will resonate throughout our teams and the communities we serve.

Sandra Li-James
Vice President, Quality, Best Practice and Education, Chief Nursing Executive and Co-Chair of Client & Carer Advisory Council

Stacey Ryan
Client and Family Voice Specialist

“VHA’s rich history of partnership with clients and carers over many years has enhanced care delivery and health outcomes as well as client and provider experiences. Over this past year we benefited from deep engagement from clients and carers throughout our strategic planning process. Their guidance helped ensure our new strategic plan keeps clients and families at the centre of all we do. VHA remains deeply committed to this collaboration as we know clients and carers are key voices in creating better systems of care and support.”

Dr. Kathryn Nichol
President and CEO



ADVISORY COUNCIL ENGAGEMENT AND IMPACT IN 2024

Key Areas of Engagement

The council played a critical role in co-designing various aspects of VHA’s operations, actively collaborating to shape policies, programs, and initiatives, including:

- **Guidelines:** Reviewing and refining service delivery protocols to ensure accessibility and relevance to diverse client needs.
- **Policies:** Contributing to the development and revision of policies to align with best practices in equity, inclusion, and client-centred care.
- **Proposals:** Evaluating new program proposals and offering constructive recommendations to enhance feasibility and impact.
- **Strategic Planning:** Collaborating in the creation of long-term strategies that prioritize sustainable growth and improved outcomes.
- **Quality Improvement:** Identifying opportunities for service enhancement and helping implement changes that reflect client and staff priorities.

Key Themes in Feedback

Council members consistently emphasized the following priorities in their feedback:

- **Plain Language and Clear Communication:** Advocating for accessible communication to ensure clients fully understand the services and resources available to them.
- **Client-Centred Approach:** Reinforcing the importance of keeping clients’ needs, values, and preferences at the forefront of decision-making.
- **Feeling Heard and Respected:** Highlighting the need for processes that empower clients to share their experiences and contribute to meaningful change.
- **Client Perspective:** Bringing attention to lived experiences, ensuring they inform policies, programs, and practices at all levels of the organization.

Notable Contributions

The Advisory Council’s involvement led to several notable advancements in 2024, including:

- Development of a **communication toolkit** to support clear, consistent, and empathetic interactions between providers and clients.
- Revisions to the **person and family-centred care procedures** to include a stronger emphasis on cultural competency and inclusivity.
- A **client feedback pathway** that creates ongoing opportunities for clients to share their voices in a structured and impactful way.
- Collaboration on the **Pharmacy at Home** initiative, ensuring the program addressed barriers faced by vulnerable populations.

Reflection and Acknowledgment

Council members expressed pride in their contributions.

In turn, VHA leadership acknowledged the council’s invaluable role, noting that *“The Advisory Council’s insights and dedication have not only improved our services but also strengthened our organizational culture of inclusion and respect.”*

The Advisory Council’s work in 2024 underscores its commitment to improving client care and provider experiences. By sharing lived experiences and focusing on purposeful engagement, the council has set a benchmark for collaboration and impact, ensuring VHA remains a leader in client-centred care.



YEAR IN REVIEW



2025-2030 Strategic Plan

Client partners played an integral role in every phase of the development of this year's Strategic Plan, from participating in Strategy Hives and the Strategic Plan Mobilization event to serving on the Strategic Planning Core Engagement Team. Their feedback was essential in helping VHA craft an innovative plan that addresses future challenges and leverages new possibilities, ensuring the long-term success of our organization.



One Team Make-a-thon

At the One Team Proof of Concept's Make-a-thon, client partners helped shape the integrated service delivery model by providing feedback on team roles, workflows, and client experience. They also helped define "Care Navigation" and "Care Concierge" and reviewed communication materials to support the pilot group, ensuring a client-centred approach.



myVHA Client Portal

Client partners contributed to the advancement of our myVHA client portal. They helped select the name "Evha" for the myVHA chatbot, reviewed wireframes and workflows for the Secure Messaging Tool, and tested the new Caregiver/Family Login Access feature. Feedback from these sessions, including usability and interface suggestions, was shared with the vendor to refine the portal and enhance the user experience.



Client Partner Sharing at the Board

3 client partners made a profound impact by sharing their lived experiences with VHA's Board of Directors. Their authentic stories highlighted opportunities for growth and innovation, inspiring actionable steps to better align our strategies with real-world needs. Through their voices, they fostered a deeper understanding and connection, shaping the organization's vision with compassion and purpose.



Supporting Innovation

Client partners played a pivotal role in the Community Innovation Lab and Advisory Committee, fostering collaboration and driving innovation. In the Lab, they evaluated technologies like radar-based fall detection systems, influencing design and defining success metrics. Through monthly Advisory Committee meetings, they guided and prioritized emerging technologies, including AI tools, rehabilitation technologies, and medication management solutions. Their insights were critical in shaping project priorities and refining initiatives, ensuring innovations were applicable to real-world scenarios and aligned with client needs.



Accreditation

Client partners were essential to our Accreditation preparation, helping review client-centred care practices and service quality standards. They also participated in Accreditation discussion sessions with our evaluators, sharing insights on Client Voice and the importance of client engagement at VHA.



Hiring Panels

Client partners participated in 11 hiring panels, bringing valuable expertise and a commitment to building an inclusive workforce. Their collaboration helped us choose candidates who reflect our values and support our success.



Ethics Committee

Client partners were instrumental in advancing a variety of initiatives including supporting the Champions of Change fellowship on "Ethical Challenges at the Point of Care", joining in the reviewing of several VHA policies and procedures, attending ethics education and consultation sessions, and helping to drive ethical culture-building at VHA.



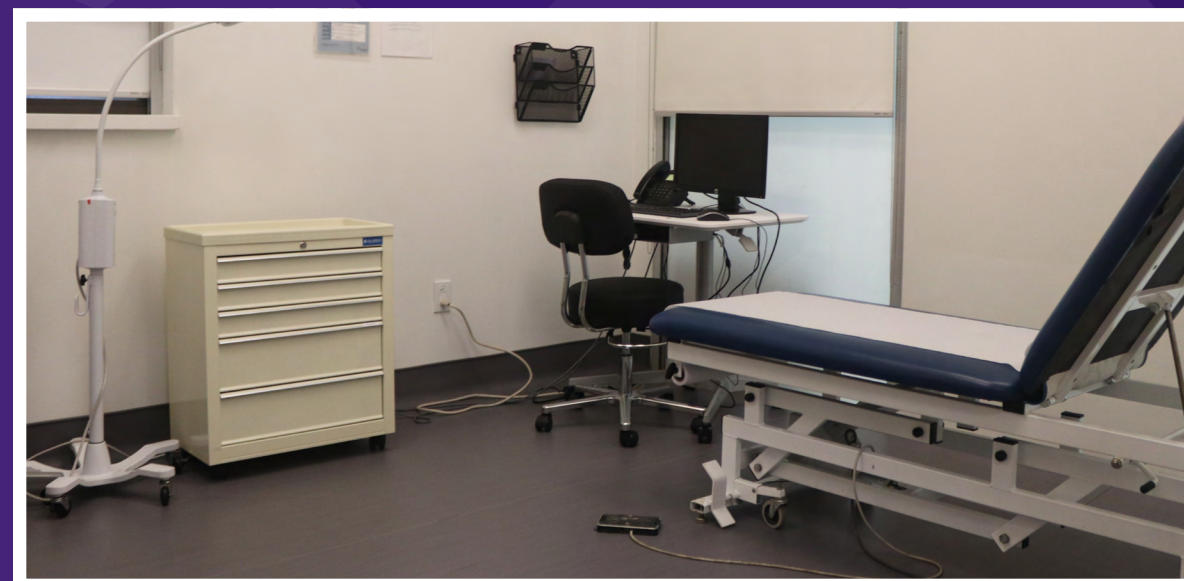
COLLABORATIVE DESIGN OF THE NEW NORTH CLINIC: A FOCUS ON CLIENT AND FAMILY NEEDS

Incorporating the unique insights, ideas and feedback of clients and their families is a key priority of person-centred care. When the North Clinic—operated by Ontario Health atHome and with nursing services provided by VHA—determined a change to a new location was appropriate, the voices of clients and families were instrumental to the design and development of the new site.

The North Clinic has provided specialized, ‘clinic-first’ nursing services in the Toronto Central region for many years with supports that include care, education and coaching for wounds, intravenous therapy, catheter and diabetes management, ostomy care and more. Before relocating these vital services to the new clinic location on the main floor in VHA’s head office building in June, the planning team collected feedback from clients on their experiences in the previous location. This consultation process led to improvements in **staffing, privacy, security, accessibility, safety and comfort** that have all had a direct impact on the quality of care. Overwhelmingly **positive feedback** from clients and families confirms that this new space meets their needs and expectations.

North Clinic client Pamela Contini received services at both locations for wound care following a leg infection. “I love this new space, and I have never met such wonderful people in my whole life. The clinic staff are amazing and the nurses are exceptional,” Pamela says. “The old clinic was fine. But this new one is home.”

This process of collaboration and shared decision-making is a First Principle at VHA which reflects the important role of clients as active partners in their services.



The layout for the clinic and its treatment rooms was informed by client partner feedback. This has helped to ensure accessibility, including ease of access for those with wheelchairs and other mobility devices.

INTRODUCING VHA'S NEW CLIENT ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

By more purposefully engaging clients, we hope to deliver care that is genuinely responsive to the needs of the communities we serve.



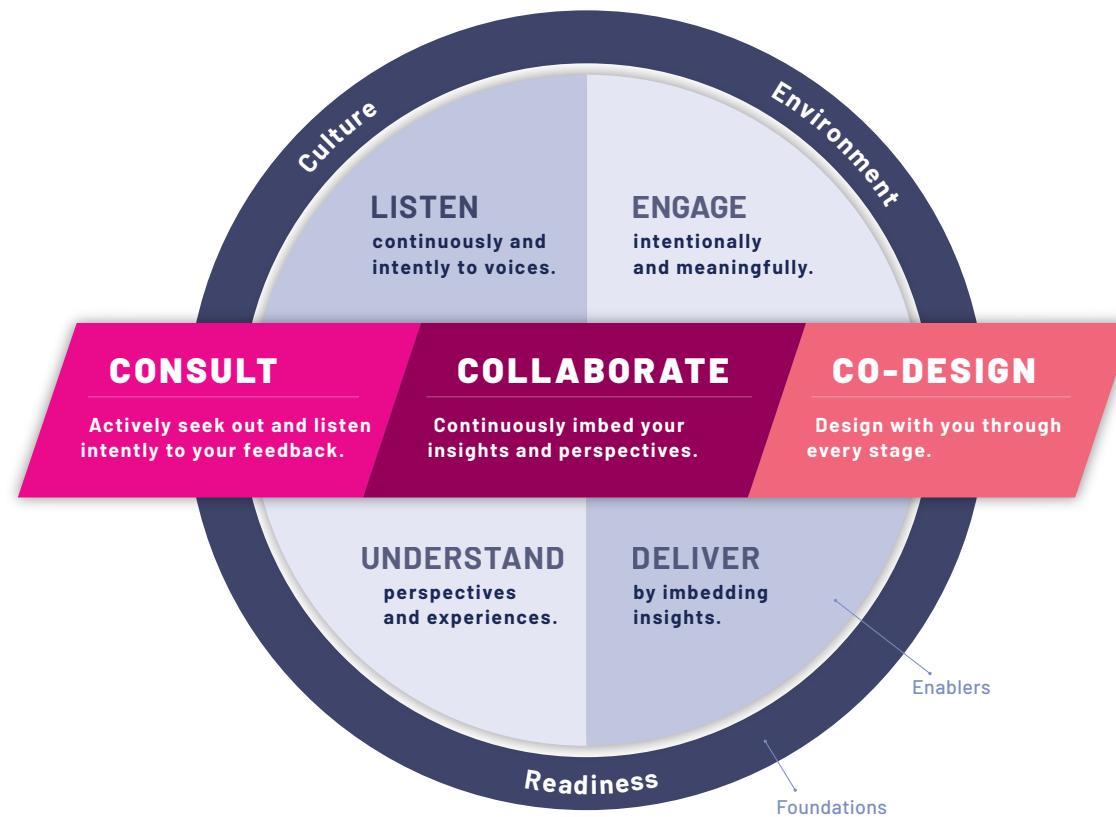
VHA aims to deliver the highest quality, person-centred care in all we do. For that, we need to involve clients in shaping the care they receive.

Our new Client Engagement Framework will help to enable that. It's an evidence-informed approach to making sure clients are meaningfully involved in their care and in shaping the programs and services that VHA provides.

In creating the framework, the team analyzed more than 9,000 research articles to identify best practices in client engagement. Working with client partners and VHA's Client Voice Steering Committee, a cross-departmental group of VHA team members who support involving clients in all of VHA's work, three foundational pillars of client engagement were established. They are: creating the right culture, fostering an environment that makes it possible, and ensuring the VHA team is ready for engagement.

The framework lays out four enablers for effective client engagement: listening to client voices, engaging clients meaningfully, understanding their experiences and delivering care that is informed by what clients have told us.

Lastly, the framework includes three levels of engagement describing a continuum of how partnership and client participation happens from 'consult', 'collaborate' and 'co-design'. The level of engagement is matched to the requirements of the activity, to ensure the most purposeful connection is leveraged.



When the framework launches in 2025, clients can expect more opportunities to get involved. Whether by joining a client advisory committee, providing feedback on new initiatives, or working side-by-side with staff to co-create solutions, clients will remain at the heart of everything we do.

	VHA Commitment	Aim / Purpose	Examples of Client Partner Activities	VHA Examples
CONSULT 	VHA will actively seek out and listen intently to your feedback.	To gather and understand client perspectives on an as needed basis.	Participate in a survey, interview, focus group or provide feedback on materials.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VHA Falls Safety Education pamphlets Microsoft Teams/virtual visit instructions handout Client experience journey mapping
COLLABORATE 	VHA will continuously embed your insights and perspectives.	To work closely with clients on an ongoing basis to integrate their perspectives and insights into specific initiatives or subject areas.	Regularly provide advice and perspectives in a council, board, or committee.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Client and Carer Advisory Council Client Safety Advisory Group Ethics Committee
CO-DESIGN 	VHA will co-design with you through every stage toward a common goal.	To empower clients towards contributing from start to finish, adhering to principles of co-design.	Collaborate as a full member of a project/initiative or working group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> myVHA Client portal project One Team Integrated Care Project Client Engagement in Research Framework

“Our goal is to make client engagement more accessible and consistent across VHA, and to support and equip staff to enable this,” says Titus Chan, VHA’s Quality Improvement and Evaluation Lead. “We want to empower clients to participate at the highest level possible, so that their expertise in their own health needs shapes the care they receive.”

POLICY REVISION DEMONSTRATES VHA'S COMMITMENT TO INCLUSIVE, CLIENT-INSPIRED CARE

Amidst ongoing efforts to transform Ontario's healthcare system, VHA continues to champion the future of health at home supported and enhanced with meaningful client input and collaborative design. As part of this commitment, VHA has finalized significant revisions to one of its guiding policies, newly named the Person- and Family-Centred Care Policy. This reimagined policy ensures that care is planned with a holistic understanding of each individual's unique needs, values, preferences, history, and culture.

“Although ‘client’ and ‘person’ can be used interchangeably, ‘person’ places greater emphasis on an individual’s role as an active participant in their care,” says Shawna Fraser, Executive Administrative Project Coordinator at VHA. “This approach fosters trust, inclusivity, and collaboration while prioritizing what matters most to individuals, their caregivers, and their communities.”

The policy revision process was anchored in client and stakeholder engagement. Drawing from an extensive literature review and best practices from leading organizations, VHA facilitated a robust organization-wide collaboration effort. A core working group, alongside several focus groups, ensured that the lived experiences and perspectives of clients, families, care providers, and office staff were central to the redesign.

“Feedback from our client partners was essential and played a pivotal role in forming this policy,”

explains Stacey Ryan, VHA's Client and Family Voice Specialist. “Incorporating their voices ensures that the policy reflects the realities of those who receive and deliver care.”

To firmly ground person-centred approaches throughout the organization, VHA is introducing a mandatory e-learning module for all staff, service providers, and new hires. The training integrates real client experiences and complaints to create scenarios that reinforce the principles.



“These changes are really about focusing in on the details that matter. Delivering safe and effective care is, of course, the foundation of a great visit. But building a genuine connection is everything—especially in home care,” Stacey explains.

“These revisions highlight the impact of creating meaningful connections,” Stacey adds. “While delivering safe, effective care is foundational, building bonds that matter truly transform a visit.”

Through this policy revision, VHA underscores its dedication to co-creating care that reflects the input, needs, and aspirations of every person and family it serves.


CLIENT PARTNER ENGAGEMENT AT VHA – BY THE NUMBERS

Shining a spotlight on our incredible client partners in 2024! Together, 26 insightful voices shared an extraordinary 382 hours of lived experiences and perspectives, innovative ideas, and invaluable guidance—fueling progress, sparking innovation, and making a real impact.


26 client partners engaged 

382 hours of engagement 

 **3** new client partners onboarded

72% of time spent collaborating via councils, committees and working groups with **27%** dedicated to development of VHA's 2025-2030 strategic plan 

8%  involved in research and innovation initiatives

12%  shaping initiatives through co-design

10%  amplifying the voice of our clients to energize and elevate our communications

3% championing the selection of top talent by contributing to interview panels 

 **13%** delivering impactful insights and perspectives through timely consultations



LOOKING AHEAD

Looking ahead to 2025, VHA and the Client Voice Steering Committee remain committed to amplifying the voices of clients and caregivers to shape better homecare services.

A primary goal is to develop a Client & Carer Declaration of Values, outlining the principles that guide care experiences and relationships.

The Steering Committee will drive this effort by fostering broad and thoughtful engagement through surveys, focus groups, and community meetings to ensure the Declaration truly represents the priorities of clients and caregivers.



THANK YOU

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the incredible Client Partners whose dedication and passion have made a lasting mark this year.

Your contributions continue to inspire and strengthen our community, and we are truly grateful for your steadfast support.

Together, we've achieved so much, and we look forward to collaborating with you in the future.

“One of the most significant things I’ve taken away from today is that it’s necessary to listen, to be involved, to be open to new ideas, and to bring care into the community.”

Linda Lallouz, Client Partner

“It’s so fabulous and interesting and exciting to see all the things that VHA does and meet the people who do it. I’m inspired by it. I want to contribute as much as I possibly can as a Client Carer Partner.”

Sonya Lockhart, Client Partner

“Participating in the co-design process is personally important to me. To think that my personal experience may positively affect others’ is very rewarding and meaningful.”

Paul Morse, Client Partner



If you are interested in learning more about participating as a VHA client partner, please contact clientvoice@vha.ca or visit vha.ca/for-clients/client-voice



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