

## Competing for quality... what does it mean?

For over a decade the province of Ontario has been using a competitive procurement process to choose providers of home care. This rigorous process has been carefully designed to facilitate the objective evaluation of organizations seeking the right to provide home health care services to the frail and vulnerable living at home. The Ontario Home Care Association (OHCA) believes that the interests of clients are best served through such an objective process – a process that is devoid of third party agendas and is driven by facts presented to a team of unbiased evaluators. Through the procurement process, the history and experience of home care providers are identified. All proponents are treated equally and must pass a series of steps in order to demonstrate their capacity on a go-forward basis.

### Innovation in wound care:

“The new wound management program introduced by [provider] is producing results - wounds are healing more quickly.”

*Family physician*

**COMPETING FOR THE RIGHT TO SERVE** means that organizations must pay constant and vigilant attention to continuous quality improvement. They must invest in continuing education, staff development and accreditation in order to assist their efforts to continuously evolve as providers of home health care. Organizations must be aware of the changing needs of the health system and be able to demonstrate their ability to translate this information to effective strategies that support the delivery of home care. In this fast paced world, the expectation of home care providers is to combine excellence and innovation and to articulate clearly and objectively how and why they can provide best value to Ontarians in need of home care services.

### Innovation in rehabilitation practices:

“The new exercises and modifications to my parent’s home have meant that my parents can manage on their own at home.”

*Client’s son*

**COMPETITION DRIVES ORGANIZATIONS TO BE RESPONSIVE** and to demonstrate that they are aware of the latest research in clinical areas such as wound management and infusion therapies and stroke rehabilitation. They must be able to identify how to translate the research to successful application in practice – adopting new care modalities and interventions based on evidence. The current health system requires that organizations be fully engaged and the procurement process tests that ability.

### Innovation in service delivery:

“The staff always arrived at my mother’s home on time, when they said they would be there. They had all my mom’s information and already knew what treatments had been done by other members of the team! I didn’t have to repeat my mother’s medical history again.”

*Client’s daughter*

**ORGANIZATIONS MUST CONSTANTLY STRIVE TO BE EFFICIENT** and in today’s world that means investing in information technology such as scheduling programs, telephony, mapping systems and point of care documentation. Proving readiness and ability to provide efficient home health care services is an outcome of a competitive procurement process.

**Innovation in employee relations:**

“My organization paid for four excellent sessions on customer satisfaction and I feel it has made a difference in how I do my job.”

*Personal Support Worker*

**HOME CARE PROVIDERS MUST KNOW HOW TO EFFECTIVELY MANAGE** the data collected through the various technological applications. Converting data to knowledge and using that information to improve home care services is tested through the competitive process.

**COMPETITION REQUIRES THAT ORGANIZATIONS DECLARE HOW THEY TREAT THEIR STAFF** - compensation, benefits, recognition, training and development are elements under analysis through the procurement process. This

formal and external examination of employer and employee relationships challenges organizations to offer the best to their staff.

**QUALITY HOME CARE IS VITAL** and should be at the centre of the health care system (Caplan 2004). Competing for the opportunity to provide home care services challenges the status quo and assumes no inherent rights. A comprehensive procurement process requires that all organizations objectively demonstrate in writing, and in person through site visits and interviews, their ability to deliver quality. Considering the significance of the responsibility that is entrusted to home care providers, the OHCA firmly supports a process that objectively measures organizations’ abilities both at the time of provider selection, and throughout the term of the resulting contracts. Those in need of home care services deserve no less.

The Ontario Home Care Association (OHCA), *the voice of home care in Ontario*, is an organization of home health and social care service providers. Association members deliver nursing care, home support services, personal care, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, social work, dietetics, speech language therapy and medical equipment and supplies in the home. Ontario Home Care Association members are contracted by all three levels of government, Community Care Access Centres, insurance companies, institutions, corporations and private individuals. OHCA members are accredited through the Canadian Council on Health Services Accreditation (CCHSA) and/or the International Standards Association (ISO).

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