

English Services Access Plan

May 2011

On April 5, the Board of Directors of the CSSS des Sommets passed a resolution that has far-reaching positive effects on the English communities served by the institution. It has now identified a range of services that are *indicated* as being available in English.

This designation now includes all standard services available in the three CLSCs in the territory (Ste. Agathe, Mont Tremblant and Labelle) as well as their services available in schools. In addition, the CSSS des Sommets is working to ensure access to adult psychiatric services in English and has undertaken to negotiate a service contract with another establishment if it is unable to provide this care directly within a reasonable amount of time. Many other services will continue to be offered on a good-faith (*bona fide*) basis, and staff will continue to be encouraged to improve their English-language skills, especially those on the front lines of service such as reception and registration desks.

There are three levels of provision of English-language services under Quebec law. The health and social services institutions are categorized as either *designated, indicated* or not listed at all. The Office québécois de la langue française *recognizes* an institution that provides services to a majority of persons who speak a language other than French. A *designated* institution is one that is acknowledged by the Government among the *recognized* institutions and is required to make its health and social services accessible in English. An *indicated* institution is one that has at least one department or service identified in the access program to provide services in English.

Of interest, too, are the definitions contained in the resolution. A *personne d'expression anglaise* (an English-speaking person) is defined as someone who, in his or her relations with an establishment providing health and social services, is more at ease expressing his or her needs and receiving services in English. A *service accessible en langue anglaise* (a service accessible in English) is understood to mean a service where the user can express him- or herself in English and receive an adequate response in that language.

This resolution comes about as a result of the study undertaken by the CRASLA (*Comité régional pour les programmes d'accès à des services de santé et des services sociaux* / Regional Committee for Access Programs to English-Language Health and Social Services), a working group in the government agency responsible for the organization of regional health and social services, made up mostly of volunteers from the English community throughout the whole administrative region of the Laurentians, which covers 7 different CSSS territories. CRASLA is charged with regularly updating this plan for three-year periods, but the 2011-2014 version is the first since 2006.

The major orientations that had to be taken into consideration in preparing this plan included the population base of the English communities, a ranking of the relative importance of the range of services required, the ease of directing the client through the institution, from reception to services responding to needs, clinical interventions and responses adapted to those needs and the involvement of English-speaking people in the decisions affecting their own and the communities' health.

The CSSS des Sommets is to be congratulated for going a big step beyond the requirements in reaching out to the English communities with services in their language.

Sheila Eskenazi, President, English Communities Committee of the CSSS des Sommets