

We Speak Launch

Since 2015, the Windsor Essex Local Immigration Partnership (WE LIP) and Erie St. Clair Local Health Integration Network (ESC LHIN) have worked in partnership to form We Speak; a language access initiative bringing together local and remote interpretation services and offering providers centralized and affordable access to quality language support.

We Speak is currently being utilized by over two dozen eligible health care providers in Windsor-Essex, Chatham-Kent, Sarnia-Lambton, and Elgin-Middlesex-London and offers interpretation in over 175 languages. More information about the initiative can be found at www.wespeak.ca.

On March 1st, WE LIP was proud to announce the launch of We Speak via the following news release:



Addressing language barriers for clients through We Speak

NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 1, 2021

In 2015, the Erie St. Clair Local Health Integration Network (ESC LHIN) and the Windsor Essex Local Immigration Partnership partnered to establish the Health Equity for Newcomers and Immigrants (HENI) committee with the aim of building a collaborative network of Health Service Providers aimed at addressing health care inequalities and improving health outcomes for newcomers and immigrants in Windsor-Essex.

As HENI embarked on a series of community engagements and outreach, where hundreds of patients and service providers came together in focus groups to discuss ways to improve patient/provider access, experience, and outcomes in health care, a shared priority emerged: the need to reduce language barriers.

Health equity is a core value in Ontario's health care system, as it is recognized that people belonging to certain groups may experience disparities in their health status, access to services and the quality of care they receive.

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Contributing to this issue are language barriers that can have a major impact on health care provision, with research indicating that patients with limited English proficiency may be excluded from or experience delays or denials in receiving health care services.

In response to this, organizational partners have come together to develop We Speak, giving providers the ability to gain access to scheduled or on demand professional interpreting services in-person, by phone or video.

As part of developing this initiative, partners formed a temporary task group focused on effectively addressing language barriers for clients. Task group members include: The University of Windsor Faculty of Nursing; The Multicultural Council of Windsor and Essex County; Windsor-Essex County Health Unit; Windsor Family Health Team; Windsor Essex Community Health Centre; the Erie St. Clair and South West LHINs and the Windsor Essex Local Immigration Partnership (WE LIP).

Provision of direct services in the language of the patient remains the preferred option. However, when this is not possible, using professional interpretation services is the next best, most effective solution to ensure quality communication and patient safety. While in-person options are available, the service also leverages other technologies, tools and best practice approaches to reduce language barriers.

Providers can register and access the service by dialing 1-866-4-WE-SPEAK (1-866-493-7732) or visiting wespeak.ca. Services for health service providers are part of a group purchase plan, allowing them to be accessed at a highly discounted rate based on group usage. Registrants also only pay for the services used.

QUOTES

"As a healthcare service, it is critical that individuals have information that is easy to understand and accessible. The ability to provide our services in the language most comfortable for our clients is critical to this goal. The We Speak video and on-demand interpretation options have allowed us to meet our clients' needs when, and how they need them, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic."

- Theresa Marentette, Chief Executive Officer, Chief Nursing Officer, Windsor-Essex County Health Unit

"During complex times We Speak has provided our service the ability to effectively communicate with clients where English was not their first language. In the past, language barriers created a large challenge during health assessments and hindered our ability to appropriately meet clients' needs in a timely manner. The translators are professional, easy to understand, patient and very supportive."

- Stacey Shepley, Captain, Professional Standards, Essex-Windsor EMS

"For years, stakeholders have consistently identified the lack of convenient, affordable, and professional interpretation services, as both a barrier and a liability to quality and equitable healthcare for newcomers. We Speak represents a well informed and well executed community inspired solution that will better outcomes for families and healthcare providers alike."

- Hugo Vega, We Speak Provider Partner, Regional Manager of Settlement and Integration Services, YMCA of Southwestern Ontario and Windsor Learning Centre

"I was just introduced to the We Speak virtual translation application and was incredibly impressed! The translator was professional, their interpretation of health conditions was accurate and the tool was incredibly easy to use. As the Executive Director of a Family Health Team, I feel We Speak provides reassurance to clinicians that they are understanding the patients' health needs and providing them with comprehensive healthcare despite language barriers."

- Margo Reilly, Executive Director, Harrow Health Centre

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The media release received coverage on [CTV News](#) and [Le Rampart](#).



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Hugo Vega, WE LIP Chair and Regional Manager of Settlement and Integration Services, at the YMCA of Southwestern Ontario and Windsor Learning Centre was also interviewed by [AM 800](#) to discuss the initiative.

This month, WE LIP distributed 200 promotional packages to health care providers in Windsor-Essex and a usage report for the initiative will be circulated amongst the Ontario Health network to build a case for continuous funding for the strategy and across the province to inform best practices.

We Speak continues to be promoted through social media. Click here for twitter moment: <https://bit.ly/3dzD8mR>

HUGO VEGA, REGIONAL MANAGER OF SETTLEMENT AND INTEGRATION SERVICES, YMCA OF SOUTHWESTERN ONTARIO AND WINDSOR LEARNING CENTRE



AUDIO CUT
Tuesday, March 2nd 2021 - 11:19 am

