

Bluewater Health
Rural Health Advisory Panel

Terms of Reference

Purpose

The purpose of the Rural Health Advisory Panel (RHAP) is to serve as a mechanism for two-way communication from the hospital to the rural communities served and from informed representatives of the rural communities to the hospital.

Roles and Responsibilities

The RHAP shall:

- Act in an advisory capacity to the senior leadership of Bluewater Health
- Be broadly representative of the rural community
- Provide for communication from the rural communities to the hospital by bringing forward community specific issues, questions and suggestions generally related to hospital operations.
- Provide for communication from the hospital to the rural communities by giving advice and input generally on operational initiatives, as requested by hospital staff
- Provide suggestions for relaying information to, and from, the rural communities.
- Provide assistance in encouraging health care decision makers to support local health care needs.

Items for discussion will reflect both Bluewater Health and panel member suggestions.

Accountability

- The RHAP will report through the President/Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to the Board of Directors of Bluewater Health.

Guiding Principles and Values

The RHAP values the following:

- Inclusion and respect for diversity
- Shared responsibility for group processes and outcomes
- Collaboration and teamwork
- Mutual respect of opinions and viewpoints
- Free sharing of information in a climate of trust
- Shared learning
- Preparation
- Respect for confidentiality when necessary (meeting information is generally not confidential; however, items that need to be kept confidential will be noted)

Meeting Protocols

The RHAP will adhere to the following protocols for meeting conduct:

- Meetings start and end on time
- Speakers and agenda items remain within specific time allocations.
- Share discussion time
- Listen without interruptions
- Encourage and support
- Respect speakers with no side conversations
- Background information will be prepared by the lead person in advance of the meeting, if required
- Everyone is responsible for group maintenance
- Put electronic devices on “silent mode”

Conflict of Interest

- The RHAP’s values include openness and transparency.
- Many RHAP members are involved with other boards and organizations that have working relationships with Bluewater Health, or are personally affected by the hospital's decisions. If a RHAP member's other activities could reasonably be expected to be materially affected by a decision on a topic under discussion by the RHAP, he or she will disclose this prior to participation in the discussion.

Composition and Selection Criteria

Composition:

The community will be represented by:

- CEEH Foundation Board (1)
- CEEH Auxiliary (1)
- Petrolia Town Council (1) member or a designate
- Petrolia/Enniskillen (1)
- four (4) from the following geographic areas: Oil Springs and Dawn-Euphemia, Brigden and St. Clair Township, Brooke/Alvinston, Plympton/Wyoming and Warwick, Lambton Shores

The hospital will be represented by:

- President/CEO
- A Director, appointed annually by the Board
- Business Director, Rural Health
- Medical Director, Rural Health
- Vice President, Professional Staff, Rural
- Staff (1), CEEH

Guests such as other hospital staff may be invited to address and/or make presentations on issues identified and agreed upon by the RHAP.

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Selection criteria

Individuals selected for the RHAP will demonstrate the following:

- An ability to connect with the rural community and local health care issues.
- An ability to participate in a meaningful way on a cross-section of issues
- An interest in the hospital and health care
- Open mindedness
- An enjoyment in interacting and learning with others
- Acceptance of the RHAP's values

New members are selected, as required, by the RHAP and the Facilitator from a list of names obtained from both local newspaper advertisements and RHAP approved recruitment suggestions. Applicants may be suggested by current RHAP members, by community leaders or may respond directly to advertisements. Recruitment will generally occur annually following the May meeting.

As volunteers, the RHAP community members are not paid for their time. Bluewater Health will reimburse reasonable, out-of-pocket expenses for meeting attendance, such as travel, child care or parking, provided completed hospital expense reimbursement forms are submitted.

Member Term

- Community members will generally serve for a period of three years, with an option for renewal for three terms but may resign at any time.
- Terms will be staggered to support continuity.
- Members unable to attend a specific meeting may not send a substitute.

Leadership Process

- The RHAP will be lead by a facilitator who is independent of the hospital and its affiliates (e.g. Foundations) in an operational capacity.
- The Facilitator will be dedicated to the RHAP and accountable to the President/CEO.
- The Facilitator will be responsible for sending meeting notices including agendas and supporting documentation to the panel.

Staff Support and Liaison

- The President/CEO will designate a staff support and liaison for the RHAP.

Meeting Frequency

- The RHAP will meet 4 times per year, generally in October, December, February and May unless otherwise determined by the RHAP.
- Meetings will generally be held in the CEEH Board Room.

Decision-Making Process

- The RHAP is an advisory group and, as such, any decisions will be made by consensus as much as possible. Should a RHAP member, or members, disagree with a particular item of advice being directed to the President/CEO, the dissenting opinion(s) will be recorded.

Communication and Reporting

Meeting agendas will:

- be developed jointly by the Panel at the conclusion of the preceding meeting with the draft circulated to all panel members prior to finalizing
- include a list of questions or issues for the next meeting as generated at the end of each meeting, via e-mail or telephone when meeting notes are distributed
- periodically include an item for “meeting evaluation”

Meeting notes:

- will be maintained by the Facilitator
- will be distributed prior to each meeting
- will not identify individual contributors by name
- will be retained in BWH Administration’s file system
- include an action register for tracking items that require a response and for listing special presentations requested
- may be reviewed by a member of the public with the facilitator, upon request

Open Meetings Guidelines

- the RHAP meetings are open to the public and a member of the public may attend a meeting upon notification to the Facilitator
- members of the public are observers
- member of the public may ask questions at the end of the meeting under the agenda item “Questions from the public”. Questions need to be submitted to the facilitator two weeks before the meeting to provide sufficient time to obtain answers
- any items of a confidential nature will be noted as such by the CEO and/or the Facilitator and will be dealt with in-camera.

The President/CEO is the official spokesperson for the Panel. The President/CEO reports to the Board of Directors on panel meetings and issues raised. The President/CEO will keep the Panel apprised of the status of matters discussed by the panel and actions taken.

Evaluation

The RHAP will evaluate its effectiveness annually, based on a review of its purpose and outcomes.