



Critical Care
Services Ontario



Ontario's Critical Care System Priorities: 2022 to 2024

Discussion Document

April 2022

1. Ontario's Integrated Critical Care System

To help ensure timely, accessible and high quality critical care in Ontario, Critical Care Services Ontario (CCSO) works in collaboration with system partners to centrally develop and coordinate integrated system solutions for critical care and associated speciality programs. The breadth of CCSO's provincial mandate and program reach is illustrated below in Figure 1. Figure 2 provides an outline of the many partners in the critical care system that play a role in providing high quality care to Ontario patients and their families, and the network of collaboration that has supported the COVID-19 pandemic response.

Figure 1: CCSO Programs and Initiatives

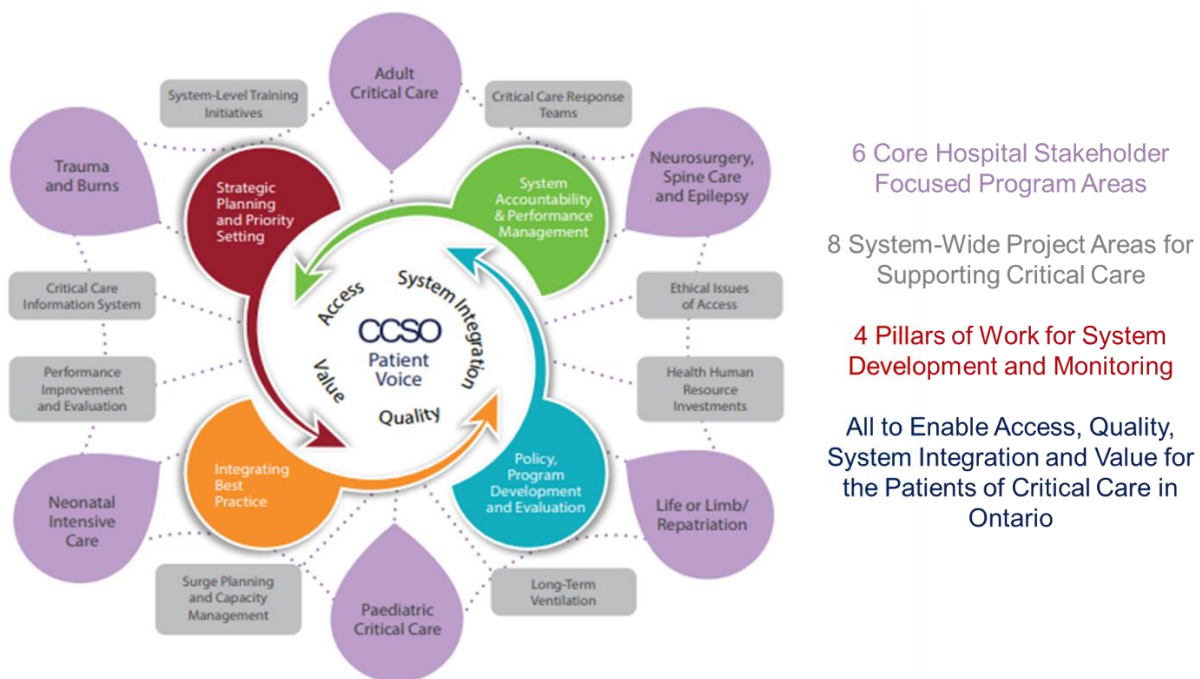
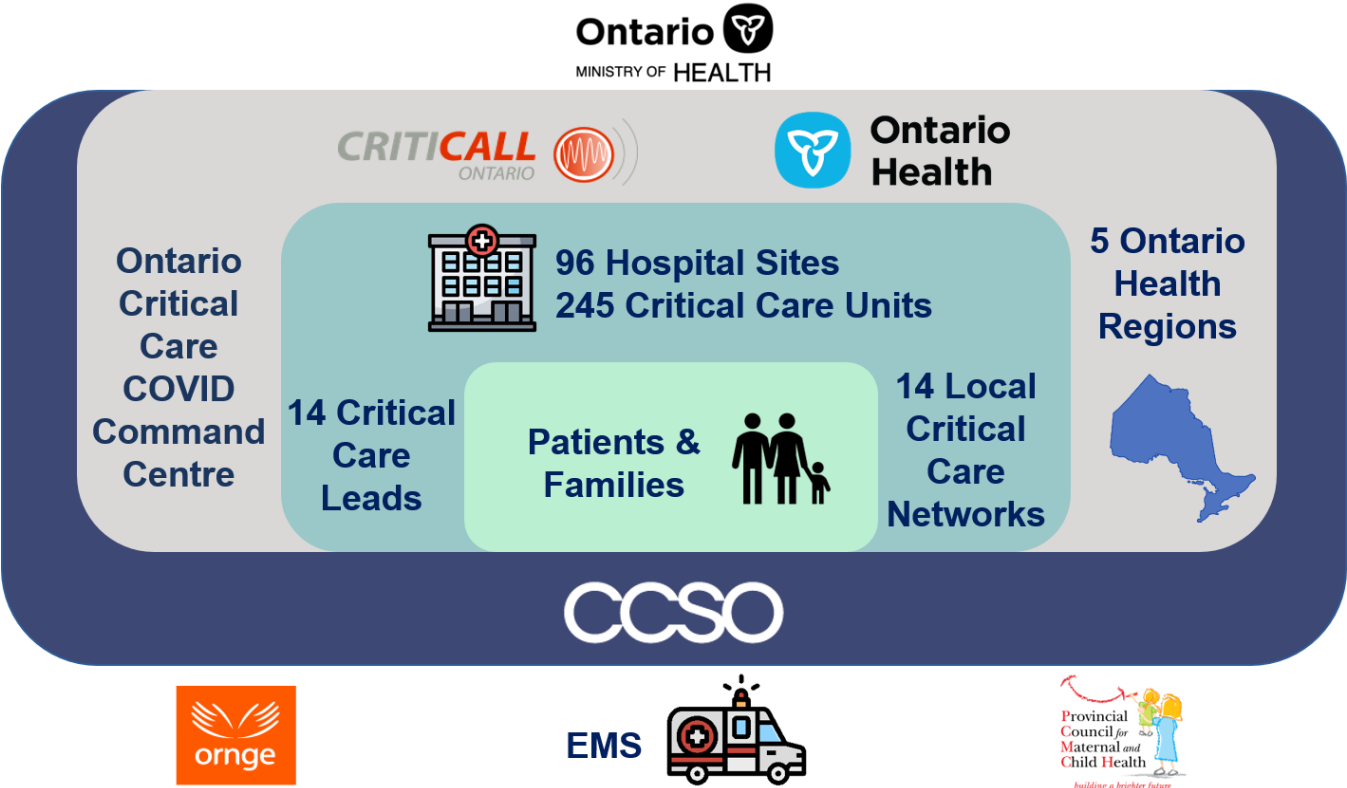


Figure 2: CCSO Partnerships to Enable an Integrated Critical Care System (FY 2021-2022)



2. Defining a Path Forward: Priorities for Critical Care and Associated Programs (2022 to 2024)

As an extension of the Ontario Critical Care Plan (2018-2021), the updated system priorities align with the 5 priority pillars of the 2018-21 plan. These have been outlined as a roadmap for critical care and associated speciality program areas (2022-2024). The priorities reflect the needs and opportunities identified through CCSO's Advisory Committees and Town Hall meetings, and CCSO's participation at local/regional and provincial planning tables during the pandemic.

Consultation Process

CCSO's Town Hall Meetings (2021)

In October 2021, CCSO conducted its Town Hall Meeting Series by hosting four regional town hall meetings, organized in alignment with the Ontario Health Regions (North, West, Toronto/Central, and East regions). With close to 400 attendees engaged, the discussion and consultation provided excellent input on which to base system priorities moving forward. The theme of the town hall meetings was *Building for the Future: The Influence of a Pandemic on Ontario's Critical Care Priorities*.

The meeting agenda incorporated planning discussions focused on health human resources, bed capacity, patient flow, and system investments that will enhance the sustainability of the critical care system. Attendees participated in breakout sessions to discuss needs in building greater capacity for a high performing and integrated critical system across adult, paediatric, and neonatal patient groups.

Critical Care System Planning

The priorities identified in this document underwent a process of review with the CCSO Advisory Committees to ensure they address the needs and opportunities identified by the critical care community.

CCSO advisory committees include the Critical Care Advisory Committee, Ontario Neonatal Intensive Care Advisory Committee, Ontario Trauma Advisory Committee, Paediatric Critical Care Advisory Committee, and the Provincial Neurosurgery Advisory Committee.

CCSO will continue to engage the critical care community and system leaders to share and discuss progress on the key objectives identified in this document, and incorporate the feedback we receive to leverage the strength of a growing, learning, networked critical care system.

Critical Care System Priorities 2022-2024


The Ontario Critical Care Plan (OCCP) 2018-2021 outlined five priority areas for action:

- 1) Advance **patient and family partnerships** to help deliver care that matters most to those who receive it.
- 2) Lead **care innovation** and data-informed improvement.
- 3) Enhance **systems of care** to deliver seamless and timely care across the continuum.
- 4) Facilitate timely **access** to critical care and improved patient **flow**.
- 5) Promote **people strength** by focusing on the skills and capacities for future-ready clinicians.

As an extension of the Ontario Critical Care Plan 2018-2021, the priorities outlined below, for 2022–2024, will guide the work that CCSO leads in collaboration with system partners, and will serve to inform CCSO’s annual operating plan deliverables to the Ministry of Health.


The priorities identified for 2022-24 align with the OCCP 2018-2021 and are similarly themed into five categories.

In partnership with the critical care community and regional leaders, CCSO will:




Patient and Family Partnerships*

Lead the development and implementation of initiatives to advance, measure and monitor patient and family partnerships across the critical care system and associated specialty programs.




Care Innovation

Lead the coordinated adoption of clinical and technological innovations to support efficient and safe quality care.




Systems of Care

Lead the development, implementation, and monitoring of initiatives to facilitate a collaborative approach, towards an integrated system of care.



Access and Flow

Lead the development, implementation, and monitoring of initiatives to facilitate access to critical care and associated services, and improve patient flow.



Health Human Resources (People Strength)

Lead the development, implementation, and monitoring of a series of system initiatives to stabilize and ensure a sustainable inter-professional workforce in critical care and associated specialty program areas.

*A patient’s family includes those who are identified by the patient to participate in care and decision-making.

In the section that follows, key objectives to achieve each of these priorities are identified.

Patient and Family Partnerships*



Priority for 2022-2024

Lead the development and implementation of initiatives to advance, measure and monitor patient and family partnerships across the critical care system and associated specialty programs.

What we know from stakeholders:

- Hospitals established new protocols and virtual channels to engage with families impacted by the restrictions to in-person visits during the pandemic.
- ICU teams recognize the value of the *Family Satisfaction in the Intensive Care Unit* (FS-ICU) electronic survey and are keen to resume surveys for units that are already participating, and extend the rollout to additional units.

Key Objectives:

- Strengthen provincial utilization of the FS-ICU tool for monitoring family satisfaction and informing improvement initiatives across adult, paediatric and neonatal patient groups.
- Expand access to performance monitoring tools for family satisfaction to inform local and regional quality improvement initiatives.
- Develop a regional/provincial system for collaboration with patient and family engagement and partnership in critical care and associated program areas (e.g. structures and roles).

*A patient's family includes those who are identified by the patient to participate in care and decision-making.

Care Innovation



Priority for 2022-2024

Lead the coordinated adoption of clinical and technological innovations to support efficient and safe quality care.


What we know from stakeholders:

- There has been success in leveraging existing and new technologies to support providers and patients in achieving care closer to home, and improving point of care access for the Life or Limb patient prior to transfer.
- The system can improve in determining data needs and access / linkages to data to inform planning and new technological innovations.
- There is a strong commitment in the critical care community to share best practices and engage in discussions with their colleagues.

Key Objectives:

- Enhance the availability of virtual care supports and life saving resources to rural and remote areas of the province.
- Enhance availability of data for quality improvement and benchmarking.
- Continue to create opportunities to share emerging critical care best practices and support ongoing knowledge translation for the critical care community.

Systems of Care



Priority for 2022-2024

Lead the development, implementation, and monitoring of initiatives to facilitate a collaborative approach towards an integrated system of care.


What we know from stakeholders:

- There is an opportunity to expand work with the regions to improve system capacity and planning in supporting the transition of patients across the system.
- The lessons learned from the province-wide response to COVID-19 can inform processes for managing a critical care major surge, building on current principles and elements of the Surge Capacity Management Program for critical care.
- There is an appetite to strengthen system performance tools, reporting and dissemination of reports and insights to support shared decision-making for pandemic response and post-pandemic operations.

Key Objectives:

- Support and facilitate the development of regional solutions and structures to enable timely, effective, and high quality systems of care delivery.
- Define the processes of critical care major surge while incorporating refinement of processes for minor and moderate surge.
- Ensure data for critical care and related programs is accessible, to support a focus on improving quality, access and system integration across providers.

Access and Flow



Priority for 2022-2024

Lead the development, implementation, and monitoring of initiatives to facilitate access to critical care and associated services, and improve patient flow

What we know from stakeholders:

- The collaboration displayed during the pandemic response can be expanded upon at the regional level to identify and mitigate service gaps, reduce barriers to access, improve flow, and quality care.
- The knowledge base can be strengthened to better understand system level capacity and capability, as well as patterns of patient flow, to strengthen critical care access.
- There is an ongoing need for collaboration with transport partners to ensure timely and appropriate care closer to home.

Key Objectives:

- Support and facilitate the development of regional solutions to enhance access to critical care and sub-specialty programs.
- Improve patient flow and reduce inequities in access to critical care and associated specialty programs.
- Identify improvement initiatives for the services, processes and mechanisms that underpin efficient patient movement in the system for critical care services.

Health Human Resources (People Strength)



Priority for 2022-2024

Lead the development, implementation, and monitoring of a series of system initiatives to stabilize and ensure a sustainable inter-professional workforce in critical care and associated specialty program areas.

What we know from stakeholders:

- A clear focus on strategies to enable retention, recruitment, and training across the inter-professional team are needed which include intentional elements to support wellness and mental health for critical care staff.
- The challenges facing critical care health human resources (HHR) are complex and require coordinated efforts with system partners (including Ontario Health, Ministry of Health, professional associations, and colleges).
- To meet local contexts, design HHR initiatives with flexibility to adapt to the needs of hospitals and critical care units.
- There is a need to integrate planning for medical models that support care delivery for increasing patient volumes.

Key Objectives:

- Partner with the Ministry of Health, Ontario Health, and educational leaders to inform and direct policy investments for the stakeholders.
- Implement HHR initiatives to improve critical care recruitment and retention, and sustain the work-life balance of practitioners.
- Facilitate knowledge transfer and exchange of effective hospital or regional based strategies to enhance critical care team wellness and retention.
- Identify strategies to augment and improve capacity to deliver patient care, leveraging medical models that optimize scope of practice.

3. Appendix – About CCSO

Established by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in 2005 as the Critical Care Secretariat, following the 2003 SARS outbreak, Critical Care Services Ontario (CCSO) continues under its mandate to work in collaboration with system partners to centrally develop and coordinate integrated system solutions for critical care, and associated speciality programs. The focus of CCSO's work is to ensure timely, accessible, and high quality critical care delivered within an integrated system for Ontario.

CCSO initially coordinated the implementation of the Provincial Critical Care Strategy (launched in 2005), which laid the foundation for many of the programs and initiatives that today supported the critical care system to effectively respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since early 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted Ontario's critical care system and the healthcare system overall. Throughout this time, CCSO's continued engagement and collaborative planning with system partners has facilitated a stronger networked system of critical care for the province.

CCSO, through ongoing collaboration with system partners, has implemented numerous programs that have become integral components of Ontario's critical care system. Many recommended as necessary improvements post-SARS, these programs and initiatives have enabled an integrated system-level critical care response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Ontario. These foundational elements include, but are not limited to the following:

- Scalable critical care surge capacity management program implemented in every Ontario hospital with a critical care unit;
- Provincial ventilator stockpile to support surges;
- The Critical Care Information System (CCIS) able to track occupied and available critical beds for every Level 2 & 3 adult and paediatric critical care unit and every Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) in Ontario;
- An Integrated system in which every adult critical care unit in the province has membership in Local Critical Care Networks (LCCNs) under guidance and support of Critical Care Clinical Leads and Hospital Vice President leads;
- Critical Care Response Teams which extend adult and paediatric critical care capacity beyond the walls of the ICU and support an increased complement of critical care providers; and
- A long history of annual critical care bed capacity planning and system investments.

CCSO is unwavering in its commitment to improve access, quality, system integration and value in Ontario's critical care system. Ongoing bi-directional communication with our system stakeholders, through multiple channels including advisory committees and town hall meetings, has provided the critical care community with opportunities to share their experiences during the pandemic, priorities for the future, and begin to define the path forward for Ontario's critical care system.