



**ACCREDITATION
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CANADA**

Accreditation Report

Qmentum Global™ for Canadian
Accreditation Program

Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia

Report Issued: November 21, 2025

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About Accreditation Canada

Accreditation Canada is a global, not-for-profit organization with a vision for safer care and a healthier world. Our people-centred programs and services have been setting the bar for quality across the health ecosystem for more than 60 years. We continue to grow in our reach and impact. Accreditation Canada empowers and enables organizations to meet national and global standards with innovative programs that are customized to local needs. Accreditation Canada's assessment programs and services support the delivery of safe, high-quality care in health systems, hospitals, laboratories and diagnostic centres, long-term care, rehabilitation centres, primary care, home, and community settings. Our specialized accreditation and certification programs support safe, high-quality care for specific populations, health conditions, and health professions.

About the Accreditation Report

The Organization identified in this Accreditation Report (the “**Organization**”) has participated in Accreditation Canada's Qmentum Global™ for Canadian Accreditation program.

As part of this program, the Organization has partaken in continuous quality improvement activities and assessments, including an on-site survey from October 20, 2025 to October 24, 2025. This Accreditation Report reflects the Organization's information and data, and Accreditation Canada's assessments, as of those dates.

Information from the assessments, as well as other information and data obtained from the Organization, was used to produce this Report. Accreditation Canada relied on the accuracy and completeness of the information provided by the Organization to plan and conduct its on-site assessments and to produce this Report. It is the Organization's responsibility to promptly disclose any and all incidents to Accreditation Canada that could impact its accreditation decision for the Organization.

Program Overview

The Qmentum Global Program enables your organization to continuously improve quality of care through the sustainable delivery of high-quality care experiences and health outcomes. The program provides your organization with standards, survey instruments, assessment methods and an actioning planning feature that were designed to promote continuous learning and improvement, and a client support model for on-going support and advice from dedicated advisors.

Your organization participates in a four-year accreditation cycle that spreads accreditation activities over four years supporting the shift from a one-time assessment while helping your organization maintain its focus on planning, implementing, and assessing quality and improvements. It encourages your organization to adopt accreditation activities in everyday practices.

Each year of the accreditation cycle includes activities that your organization will complete. Accreditation Canada provides ongoing support to your organization throughout the accreditation cycle. When your organization completes year 4 of the accreditation cycle, Accreditation Canada's Accreditation Decision Committee determines your organization's accreditation status based on the program's accreditation decision guidelines. The assessment results and accreditation decision are documented in a final report stating the accreditation status of your organization. After an accreditation decision is made, your organization enters year 1 of a new cycle, building on the actions and learnings of past accreditation cycles, in keeping with quality improvement principles.

The assessment manual (Accreditation Canada Manual) which supports all assessment methods (self-assessment, attestation, and on-site assessment), is organized into applicable Standards and ROPs. To promote alignment with the assessment manual (Accreditation Canada Manual), assessment results and

surveyor findings are organized by Standard, within this report. Additional report contents include a comprehensive executive summary, the organization's accreditation decision, locations assessed during the on-site assessment, required organizational practices results, and conclusively, People-Centered Care and Quality Improvement Overviews.

Executive Summary

About the Organization

With over 60 years of service, Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia (HSNS) provides audiology services for all Nova Scotians and speech-language pathology services for preschool children, adults, and home-schooled children. HSNS is incorporated under the Nova Scotia Societies Act and provincially licensed through the Nova Scotia Regulator of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists.

The organization provides direct care—prevention, assessment, diagnostic, treatment, and training—and caregiver coaching; develops and monitors consistent standards of clinical practice; and collaborates with provincial and community partners to deliver specialty programs. Specialty programs include cochlear implant, balance, auditory processing, newborn hearing screening, autism, early intensive behavioural intervention, stroke, dysphagia, and cleft palate.

HSNS has a staff of 177 people serving in 25 communities, with 35 clinical sites, including 13 non-hospital sites. Approximately 50% of staff are located across the province, working in communities outside Halifax. The organization also supports more than 50 student placements each year in partnership with the Dalhousie University School of Communication Sciences and Disorders.

Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia is highly commended for the impressive steps taken since the last survey to advance patient safety and quality of care, further continuous quality improvement and patient-centred care approaches, and dedicate efforts to learning and actions that address systemic racism and Indigenous-specific racism.

Surveyor Overview of Team Observations

Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia (HSNS) teams are champions of quality care for clients and families, collaborative partners, and innovators. The teams are clearly responsive to community needs, having undertaken several initiatives, including the Preschool Accessibility Innovations Project, group service models, and partnerships with hospital programs.

There is a strong culture of team support, coupled with a consistent drive to achieve the vision and mission of HSNS. As noted by the organization, HSNS staff are agile and nimble. The teams are commended for sharing their expertise, curiosity, and commitment to ongoing professional development. HSNS staff members are described as never losing hope, advocating for clients, and never compromising standards of practice.

Key Opportunities and Areas of Excellence

Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia (HSNS) is commended for its exceptional commitment and efforts in striving to achieve the strategic goals of Accessibility, Communication, and Engagement. Key initiatives were advanced through a whole-organization approach—a truly shared goal. It is evident that there is a high level of engagement in quality initiatives, with everyone committed to achieving the same outcomes for care.

The organization is also commended for the remarkable depth of engagement with clients and families. The Partners in Care Committee is recognized, at all levels, for improving service quality.

HSNS is further commended for its dedicated efforts to address cultural safety through the Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Reconciliation and Accessibility (EDIRA) Committee and the Reconciliation Action Plan, which was formed and led by Indigenous communities.

HSNS clients are experiencing long wait-lists in both children's and adult services. It is evident that the organization has seized every opportunity to address long wait times through successful advocacy for funding in preschool hearing and speech, as well as through donations and partnerships to leverage resources. HSNS has demonstrated great capacity to respond and collaborate. Leadership is encouraged to continue exploring partnerships and to elevate communication regarding the depth and breadth of the organization's capacity to provide quality care.

The organization is commended for the development and early implementation of the Talent Management Plan and the onboarding of the new Manager of People and Culture. HSNS is encouraged to continue advancing this plan, with staff engagement, to best support recruitment and retention.

People-Centred Care

Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia (HSNS) consistently demonstrates a strong commitment to client- and family-centred care, actively listening to the perspectives, goals, and preferences of clients and families to guide all aspects of service delivery. HSNS supports clients and families to participate actively in their care as equal partners. Clinicians view themselves as coaches and collaborators in service delivery, rather than simply providers of care.

Staff across HSNS have developed a strong ability to build genuine, trusting relationships with clients and families, creating an inclusive environment where individuals feel valued, supported, and heard. Staff take great pride in their ability to collaborate effectively, using a trauma-informed approach to care, motivational interviewing techniques, and the EDIRA framework to build trust and confidence in service delivery.

HSNS staff work closely with referral sources and community partners to ensure coordinated and effective care across all services. These partnerships strengthen networks of providers and support programs that enhance the overall well-being of HSNS clients and families.

Client engagement is a key strength of HSNS, with opportunities to further enhance the involvement of clients and families in shaping services and strategic and operational plans. The Partners in Care Committee provides valuable feedback to the organization; expanding its membership to include individuals from rural areas would enrich discussions and perspectives. Additionally, extending the role of Partners in Care representatives on the board to include voting privileges would allow for seamless integration of client and family voices in decision-making.

By strengthening and expanding the involvement of clients and families, HSNS would be demonstrating a true commitment to providing collaborative, client- and family-centred care that reflects the needs and lived experiences of service recipients.

Quality Improvement Overview

Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia (HSNS) is highly commended for fully integrating quality into all aspects of the organization, with a high level of engagement across the board—including staff, clients, families, and the Board of Directors. The Integrated Quality Care and Patient Safety Plan, with the Risk Plan embedded within, provide an accessible and relatable focus on quality care and safety in all activities. The strategic goals of accessibility, communication, and engagement are aligned with quality improvement efforts coordinated across the organization.

HSNS is also commended for addressing hesitancy in incident reporting through Clearview Connects, a reporting tool that has increased comfort in bringing quality and safety issues to the forefront—helping to mitigate risk and improve care.

As the organization enters its upcoming strategic planning process, it is encouraged to develop a communication plan for staff, clients, families, and community partners. Early consultation, followed by report-back messaging upon completion of the plan and annually thereafter, will reflect HSNS's commitment to stakeholders and highlight the organization's progress and capacity to deliver high-quality care.

Accreditation Decision

Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia's accreditation decision is:

Accredited with Exemplary Standing

The organization has exceeded the fundamental requirements of the accreditation program.

Locations Assessed during On-Site Assessment

The following locations were assessed during the organization's on-site assessment:

- Halifax - Dickson
- Halifax - IWK
- Halifax Community Clinic
- Kentville-Valley Regional Hospital
- New Glasgow-Provost Street
- NSHSC Provincial Centre (Main Office)

¹Location sampling was applied to multi-site single-service and multi-location multi-service organizations.

Required Organizational Practices

Required Organizational Practices (ROPs) are essential practices that an organization must have in place to enhance client safety and minimize risk. ROPs contain multiple criteria, which are called Tests for Compliance (TFC).

Table 1: Summary of the Organization's ROPs

ROP Name	Standard(s)	# TFC Rating Met	% TFC Met
Accountability for Quality of Care	Governance	5 / 5	100.0%
Client Flow	Leadership	5 / 5	100.0%
Hand-hygiene Compliance	Infection Prevention and Control for Community-Based Organizations	3 / 3	100.0%
Hand-hygiene Education and Training	Infection Prevention and Control for Community-Based Organizations	1 / 1	100.0%
Infection Rates	Infection Prevention and Control for Community-Based Organizations	0 / 0	0.0%
Infusion Pump Safety	Service Excellence for Community Health Services	0 / 0	0.0%
Medication Reconciliation as a Strategic Priority	Leadership	0 / 0	0.0%
Patient Safety Education and Training	Leadership	1 / 1	100.0%
Patient Safety Incident Disclosure	Leadership	6 / 6	100.0%
Patient Safety Incident Management	Leadership	7 / 7	100.0%
Preventive Maintenance Program	Leadership	4 / 4	100.0%
Reprocessing	Infection Prevention and Control for Community-Based Organizations	2 / 2	100.0%

Table 1: Summary of the Organization's ROPs

ROP Name	Standard(s)	# TFC Rating Met	% TFC Met
Workplace Violence Prevention	Leadership	8 / 8	100.0%

Assessment Results by Standard

The following section includes the outcomes from the attestation (if applicable) and on-site assessments, at the conclusion of the on-site assessment.

Core Standards

Qmentum Global™ for Canadian Accreditation has a set of core assessment standards that are foundational to the program and are required for the organization undergoing accreditation. The core assessment standards are critical given the foundational areas of high quality and safe care they cover.

The core standards are always part of the assessment, except in specific circumstances where they are not applicable.

Governance

Standard Rating: 100.0% Met Criteria

0.0% of criteria were unmet. For further details please review the table at end of this section.

Assessment Results

The governing body is a strong champion of Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia (HSNS). The Board of Directors is focused on quality care and safety and is commended for its engagement in learning opportunities that support good governance. The Board is further recognized for its efforts to improve governance quality through regular evaluations, planning, and the implementation of improvements.

The Board is also commended for including client representatives in governance and is encouraged to continue its journey toward creating opportunities for full client participation as Board members. The Board is recognized for its engagement in ethical decision-making activities.

With the upcoming development of a new strategic plan, the Board is encouraged to support the full engagement of staff, clients, families, and community partners to help inform the plan.

The Board is commended for its support of investment in human resources, including efforts to strengthen the organization's human resource strategy and the provision of innovation funds to support meaningful service opportunities.

Table 2: Unmet Criteria for Governance

There are no unmet criteria for this section.

Infection Prevention and Control for Community-Based Organizations

Standard Rating: 100.0% Met Criteria

0.0% of criteria were unmet. For further details please review the table at end of this section.

Assessment Results

Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia (HSNS) is committed to maintaining a safe, clean, and infection-free environment for employees, clients, families, and visitors. The organization's infection prevention and control (IPAC) practices are guided by evidence-based standards, Nova Scotia Health policies, and Nova Scotia Public Health directives. IPAC is viewed as a shared responsibility, integrated into all service delivery areas to ensure safety remains a consistent organizational priority. Policies and procedures are accessible to all staff via SharePoint and can be easily located using the search function. The widespread availability of hand hygiene stations and sinks reflects HSNS's commitment to promoting safe practices and reducing the risk of infection. Strong leadership support continues to foster a culture of safety and prevention across the organization.

Oversight of IPAC activities is provided by senior leadership in collaboration with the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Committee. Staff members receive comprehensive IPAC training at orientation and throughout their employment to ensure competency and confidence in applying safe practices. Education includes topics such as hand hygiene, use of personal protective equipment (PPE), cleaning and disinfection, management of exposure incidents, and reporting of communicable diseases in accordance with public health requirements. Annual retraining in hand hygiene is mandatory, and HSNS conducts yearly self-audits of hand hygiene practices. The organization may consider increasing the frequency of these audits and reducing subjectivity to further enhance consistency, accuracy, and compliance.

High-touch surfaces are cleaned daily, with completion logged and reviewed monthly to verify adherence to cleaning protocols. Staff and client vaccination practices are aligned with Nova Scotia Health and Nova Scotia Public Health recommendations and timelines. Any concerns related to client or staff safety involving IPAC can be reported through the incident reporting system and are reviewed and investigated by the OHS Committee.

HSNS promotes a proactive and collaborative approach to infection prevention and control, emphasizing education, monitoring, and shared accountability. Staff are encouraged to perform a point-of-care risk assessment to determine appropriate risk levels and PPE requirements. By maintaining strong engagement with staff and clients, expanding the frequency of audits, and reinforcing evidence-based practices, HSNS continues to demonstrate its commitment to safe, high-quality, and client-centred care in alignment with provincial and national standards.

Table 3: Unmet Criteria for Infection Prevention and Control for Community-Based Organizations

There are no unmet criteria for this section.

Leadership

Standard Rating: 100.0% Met Criteria

0.0% of criteria were unmet. For further details please review the table at end of this section.

Assessment Results

Governance

The governing body of Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia (HSNS) is deeply committed to advancing the organization's mission. Board members demonstrate a strong dedication to continuous learning, monitoring, and improving governance practices—providing strategic guidance and contributing to the effectiveness and sustainability of the organization. Notable examples include significant progress in addressing priority areas identified in the previous survey and advancing service quality and client safety.

The Board is commended for prioritizing and supporting an innovative service improvement project, recommended by a client, to support stroke survivors with communication challenges following hospital discharge. This initiative helped clients stay connected through peer networks and skilled volunteer support.

The Board is also recognized for its engagement in and championing of HSNS's Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Reconciliation, and Accessibility (EDIRA) and Reconciliation Action Plans. Further strides have been made in people-centred care, including initial steps to support client representation at the governance table. The Board is encouraged to continue creating opportunities for full client participation as Board members.

The HSNS Board is actively engaged in the early stages of leading a new strategic planning process, scheduled to begin later this fall. As with the previous strategic plan, the Board will collaborate with the organization to review HSNS's mission, vision, and values, support environmental scanning, and engage staff, clients, families, and community partners to inform the development of the new strategic plan. The Board is encouraged to expand engagement with community partners during this planning cycle. Defined accountabilities include receiving regular updates and member participation on the Strategic Planning Core Committee.

The Board is commended for its leadership and engagement in ethics, including representation on the Ethics Decision-Support Working Group and dedicated time for ethical discussions.

Defined processes are in place for Board member recruitment, orientation, and mentorship. Continuing education is embedded in the Board's annual calendar and includes learning opportunities on cultural safety, humility, and Indigenous-specific systemic racism.

The Board regularly reviews HSNS's performance indicators, including those related to health and safety. These reports cover strategic priorities, safety and risk management, client and community services, resource utilization and performance, and the quality improvement plan—all integrated within the organization's impressive Integrated Quality Care and Patient Safety Plan. The Board is encouraged to engage key stakeholders upon completion of the strategic plan and annually thereafter to inform and strengthen the quality improvement cycle.

The Board is commended for its support of investment in human resources, including efforts to strengthen the organization's human resource strategy.

The Board is currently in the early stages of recruiting a new leader. Discussions indicate a commitment

to a comprehensive recruitment and selection process that aligns with HSNS's mission, vision, and values, and is responsive to the organization's future needs.

Processes are in place to approve capital and operating budgets and to regularly review the organization's financial control systems to ensure integrity.

The Board is attentive to environmental stewardship, as demonstrated by HSNS's efforts to reduce plastic use and engage staff in related activities.

Finally, the Board is commended for its progress in governance evaluation. Regular evaluations of the chair and vice-chair, individual member reviews, and use of the Governance Functioning Tool have helped identify and address areas for improvement.

Planning and Service Design

Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia (HSNS) is approaching the end of its current strategic plan and is preparing to begin development of a new plan later this year. As with the previous planning cycle, the organization intends to review its vision, mission, and values with input from staff, clients, families, and community partners.

It is evident that the current strategic plan has served as a living document—reviewed regularly and revised as needed to reflect current and anticipated priorities, while remaining anchored to the strategic pillars. HSNS is commended for the structures and processes in place to monitor and improve operational planning and reporting, including the quarterly Strategic Planning Core Committee, which includes representation from the Board, leadership, staff, and clients. Additional sources of feedback include staff input, incident reports, the Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology (SLP) Best Practice Councils, and the Partners in Care Advisory group. Through these engagement processes, staff recognize their contributions toward achieving HSNS's strategic priorities.

The leadership team is commended for promoting and strengthening collaborative partnerships aimed at supporting and enhancing quality care for clients and families. Key partnerships include government funding and policy bodies, IWK Health, Dalhousie University School of Communication Sciences and Disorders, Balsam, Eskasoni Health Centre, Autism Nova Scotia, and the Nova Scotia Health Ethics Network.

HSNS leadership strongly supports an evidence-based approach to decision-making that fosters quality and innovation. This is demonstrated through continuous information gathering and monitoring of progress toward operational goals, client and staff feedback, and safety and risk reports. The creation of the Audiology and SLP Best Practice Councils further supports timely, evidence-informed decision-making and aligns with the Strategic Planning Core Committee. The recent hiring of a data analyst has enhanced HSNS's capacity for informed decision-making.

The organization's agility is evident in its ability to respond to emerging needs and deliver innovative, responsive services within available capacity. Based on insights gathered through planning processes, the leadership team prepares and presents business cases to funding bodies to advocate for addressing unmet needs. Funders have noted that these business cases reflect exceptional planning, providing clarity and a high level of detail.

Resource Management

Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia (HSNS) is highly commended for its well-defined structures and processes for resource allocation planning. Internally, the team applies a coordinated approach, gathering information from strategic and operational plan progress, environmental scans, risk and health and safety reports, and client and staff priorities. Externally, the team considers government funding pressures and the priorities and collaborative opportunities presented by community partners. These factors collectively inform resource allocation decisions. The team also develops three-year capital plans with consideration of emerging trends.

The Board of Directors and leadership team are commended for significant investments in support of people-centred care. HSNS supports a highly active and meaningfully engaged client advisory group (Partners in Care) and ensures the client voice is present at the governing table. The organization also supported a new program through the innovation fund, based on a proposal from a client.

There is a well-defined process for the Board to review and approve financial reports, as well as annual and capital budgets. The Board maintains a no-deficit policy, and the organization undergoes an annual external audit.

Human Capital

A core strength of Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia (HSNS): its clinical expertise and provincial reach—a reflection of the organization's deep commitment to accessible, high-quality care and, most especially, the expertise, spirit, and dedication of its staff. HSNS employs 170 staff, 50% of whom live and work outside Halifax. The organization also supports more than 50 student placements annually in partnership with Dalhousie University School of Communication Sciences and Disorders.

It is evident that HSNS staff members are deeply passionate about providing high-quality care for clients and families and are dedicated to the organization's vision, mission, and values. Many staff members met during the survey have been with the organization for more than 10 years. HSNS is commended for the recent addition of a Manager of People and Culture to enhance staff support and resources. Additionally, Team Lead positions were created seven months ago, providing opportunities for staff development and recognizing contributions to administrative and communication disorders activities and projects.

HSNS has developed and is implementing a comprehensive Talent Management Plan for 2025–2026, aligned with Accreditation Canada standards. The framework strategically integrates recruitment, onboarding, learning and development, performance management, recognition, succession planning, and respectful offboarding. Priorities include targeted retention strategies, core and advanced clinical training for all roles, continuous feedback and coaching loops, and staff appreciation initiatives. The leadership team is encouraged in its efforts to achieve the priorities of this plan.

HSNS adopts a comprehensive approach to promoting and supporting organizational health, including the development and implementation of an extensive Integrated Quality Care and Patient Safety Plan. This plan is built on the five pillars of the Canadian Quality and Safety Framework for Health Services and includes the Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Reconciliation, and Accessibility (EDIRA) Plan. The EDIRA Plan has supported staff and Board education, consultations with Indigenous organizations, and client engagement through the Partners in Care advisory group. The Integrated Quality Care and Patient Safety Plan encompasses safe care and staff wellness, just culture, risk management, and the Health Standards Organization (HSO) Workforce Wellbeing Plan. HSNS is highly commended for the development and implementation of this plan, with many priorities already well underway.

HSNS has defined processes for staff recruitment and selection, including qualifications, alignment with organizational goals, and attention to potential unconscious bias—evidenced by staff training on cultural safety. The organization has a robust orientation process, with initial onboarding spread over a five-week period. Staff and leadership are supported with ongoing education.

In the past year, HSNS staff participated in the HSO survey. A two-year action plan was launched in November 2024 to address priority areas including time to complete tasks, psychological safety (“safe to report mistakes”), retention, and burnout. In addition to recruiting a Manager of People and Culture, HSNS has taken steps to create a safer learning environment, enhance staff wellness resources, and explore strategies to improve retention.

The organization faces recruitment challenges due to a national shortage of professional staff and difficulties in attracting candidates to rural sites. Additionally, service wait-lists exceed current staffing capacity, contributing to staff stress. HSNS now considers long wait times a “harm to client incident,” elevating and advocating for increased service capacity. Leadership is transparent in communicating priorities and efforts to improve worklife quality and advocate for resources to meet community needs.

The organization is encouraged in its ongoing work with the two-year HSO Plan and the broader Integrated Quality of Care and Patient Safety Plan.

HSNS staff receive annual safety training. In recognition of Canadian Patient Safety Week, the organization will be raising awareness through daily communications focused on all aspects of client safety.

Integrated Quality Management

Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia (HSNS) Board leadership is highly committed and focused in its efforts to support, lead, monitor, and report on quality improvement initiatives aligned with organizational and system-level priorities. It is evident that HSNS strives to foster a culture of learning and continuous improvement. The leadership team strongly supports staff engagement in quality initiatives and encourages learning from improvement results to enable ongoing progress. Staff are familiar with quality improvement tools such as LEAN and Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) models. Staff and Partners in Care are actively engaged in quality initiatives and are often invited to participate in improvement planning activities.

A member of staff is recognized at the biennial staff gathering for their contributions to service quality. The organization is encouraged to implement more frequent recognition of staff contributions to further promote a culture of quality and acknowledge ongoing efforts.

The leadership team is commended for supporting Best Practice Councils that further engage staff and clients in priority quality improvement initiatives. These councils are directly aligned with the organization's Integrated Quality Care and Safety Plan and the Strategic Planning Core Committee, which has oversight and is linked to the Board.

Following the review of staff feedback from the HSO survey last year—where staff indicated reluctance to report safety issues—the organization took steps to encourage anonymous reporting as a critical component of process improvement. Increased reporting, welcomed responses, and identified improvements suggest that staff are gaining comfort in raising safety concerns.

HSNS has processes in place to regularly report on performance indicators, sharing results internally with the Board, staff, clients, and families, and externally with community partners, funders, and the public through annual reports and the organization's website. The organization is commended for securing a full-time data analyst, further strengthening its quality improvement capacity. Decision-making, safety and risk management, communication, and service advocacy will benefit from more timely, focused, and current information.

HSNS Board, leadership, staff, and Partners in Care are highly commended for the impressive progress in developing, implementing, and regularly reviewing the Integrated Quality Improvement Plan, aligned with the Patient Safety and Risk Management Plans. Client feedback and engagement through the Partners in Care Advisory Committee are central to informing, reviewing, and improving these plans. The Board receives regular risk reports and monitors risks and action plans to address high-risk areas. The Client Safety Plan and Risk Management Plans are evaluated on an ongoing basis.

HSNS has a clear and accessible system in place to report safety concerns and incidents. The recent launch of Clearview Connects, an incident reporting system, has led to increased reporting, enabling more timely identification of issues and pathways for learning and improvement. The organization informs staff, clients, and families about the system through staff presentations, monthly leadership briefings, manager meetings, and point-of-service communication, as well as access via the HSNS website.

The leadership team is also commended for the significant and comprehensive steps taken to improve the safety incident management system, including incorporating client and staff input into its review and enhancement. It is evident that the organization regularly revises the system and uses incident data to inform improvements.

Communication

Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia (HSNS) leadership effectively promotes the organization and demonstrates the value of its services to stakeholders and communities through the sharing and posting of annual reports, social media content, videos, presentations, participation at service tables, and attendance at provincial meetings. The team is encouraged to enhance the feedback loop when engaging stakeholders in the upcoming development and implementation of the new strategic plan. This could include implementing an annual report-back and annual progress report on the strategic plan. These “check-in opportunities” further highlight the value of HSNS, communicate the organization’s commitment to quality, transparency, and accountability, and reinforce the importance of relationships with key partners.

HSNS regularly monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of stakeholder engagement. The organization maintains processes to keep information current regarding the health and social service needs of the community through ongoing environmental scans, collaboration and information sharing with community partners, and continuous engagement with staff and clients to gather insights on service needs and trends.

The organization has implemented a provincial electronic medical record (EMR) system to better meet operational needs. Tracers conducted during the survey indicated that this relatively new system is positively received by staff and offers improved quality of information, as well as enhanced capacity for data collection and analysis.

HSNS recently redeveloped its website to improve usability and invested in expertise to ensure the site meets accessibility standards. Internal communications have also been strengthened through the use of SharePoint and Aprio, the Board portal. The leadership team provides a monthly briefing note to all staff, offering updates on organizational activities, priorities, events, and projects.

Clients have been actively engaged in communication strategies, with the Partners in Care advisory group contributing to the evaluation and improvement of the revised website. Their feedback has helped shape enhancements that support accessibility and client experience.

Principle Based Care and Decision Making

Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia (HSNS) ethics co-leaders and the Ethics Decision-Support Working Group are commended for their progressive strategies and successes in embedding ethical awareness and decision-making into the day-to-day activities of the organization. The Ethics Working Group meets every second month and holds an annual working day. The group has also initiated a creative “coffee corner” activity, presenting staff with fictional ethical scenarios that encourage reflection and discussion—offering staff an opportunity to step outside their daily routines and consider ethical issues with potential relevance to their work.

Notably, the Board has meaningfully engaged in service delivery decisions using an ethical lens. It is evident that the Board, leadership, and staff value ethical perspectives in supporting decision-making. The organization regularly applies an ethical lens to organizational-level decisions.

HSNS has an ethics framework and a formal process in place to review external research requests, with client protection as the top priority.

Leadership is commended for embedding ethical approaches into the culture of the organization and for strongly supporting and elevating the activities of the Ethics Working Group, aligning them with the Strategic Planning Core Committee.

The Ethics Working Group is encouraged to explore strategies for incorporating ethical concepts from an Indigenous lens, including the principle of two-eyed seeing, and to consider how these perspectives might be integrated into HSNS’s ethics framework.

Emergency Preparedness

Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia (HSNS) has an impressive, integrated, and comprehensive plan with well-defined structures and processes in place to support organizational and staff participation in emergency and disaster mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. The leadership team is commended for conducting detailed annual emergency and disaster tabletop exercises. Discussions and documentation confirm that these simulations are thorough, focusing on step-by-step progression, containment and initial response, recovery, and operational continuity. Each exercise includes post-incident reviews, mock communications, staff wellness simulations, and consideration of continuity challenges. Key decision points are identified throughout the process, and follow-up actions are documented and addressed. The team is also commended for maintaining strong partnerships with government agencies to support collaborative planning and coordinated action in the event of an emergency. It is evident that staff receive education on emergency and disaster management during orientation and throughout their employment at HSNS, reinforcing a culture of preparedness and safety.

Client Flow

Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia (HSNS) delivers an efficient, coordinated, and client-centred approach to service access and flow. The organization's values—client-centred care, leadership, accessibility, support, safety, integrity, and collaboration—serve as the foundation for every stage of the client journey.

Clients can access HSNS services through multiple referral pathways, including self-referral or referral from health care providers, educators, or community partners. Once received, referrals are promptly reviewed and placed on the appropriate service wait-list. Clients may opt to be added to a cancellation list, allowing for earlier appointment opportunities when available. They may also choose to attend a different service location with a shorter anticipated wait time, supporting flexibility and accessibility.

At the first point of contact, HSNS staff confirm demographic information, clarify the reason for referral, and identify any accessibility needs, such as interpretation or translation services. Clients are informed of expected wait times and provided with contact details should they wish to follow up while awaiting their appointment. An acknowledgment letter is sent by mail or email summarizing this information, reinforcing clarity and communication.

Wait times are managed through a consistent, evidence-informed triage process. All staff use the Priority Referral Triage Tool to categorize clients as time-sensitive, priority, or regular. This tool is applied universally across HSNS and is regularly reviewed to reflect current best practices, benchmarks, and national service standards.

Client flow is recognized by leadership as a critical component of operational efficiency and service quality, and it is highlighted within the organizational operational plan. Leadership supports innovation and technology to enhance client flow, including staff-driven initiatives. For example, the inclusion of the cancellation list option on the referral form originated from staff feedback. Additionally, a pilot project in Cape Breton evaluating automated appointment reminders demonstrated a 50 percent reduction in no-show and cancellation rates, underscoring the value of technology in improving service continuity.

Staff have the capability to monitor and manage wait-lists through the electronic medical record (EMR) system. The development of a dashboard summarizing client flow metrics—such as wait times and service delivery trends—on a monthly or quarterly basis would further support staff and leadership in monitoring performance and identifying opportunities for improvement across sites and programs.

Physical Environment

In June 2025, Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia (HSNS) opened a replacement site for the Halifax Community Clinic, designed to serve as a model for future clinic locations. The new facility features abundant natural light in treatment spaces and staff work areas, creating a welcoming and comfortable environment. The design was informed by consultations with clients and the public to ensure the space meets the needs of those who use it.

The facility supports improved infection prevention and control (IPAC) procedures, including an industrial dishwasher for cleaning toys and equipment, and a designated area with a sink for washing contaminated items. Environmental sustainability was also considered, with features such as dimmable LED lighting. Safety measures include a panic button at the reception desk. Physical accessibility is enhanced through a universally designed washroom, accessible sound booths, and the elimination of carpet in client areas. The clinic is conveniently located with ample free parking and proximity to a major bus depot, improving accessibility for the diverse population it serves. Final enhancements to the space include outdoor signage, interior colours, and wayfinding signage.

HSNS demonstrates a strong commitment to environmental safety, accessibility, and client-centred design. The organization continuously evaluates and upgrades its facilities to provide a clean, organized, and supportive environment that promotes the health, comfort, and well-being of clients, families, and staff.

Based on site visits to other HSNS locations, potential improvements include adding an automatic door to the main entrance of the New Glasgow site. This enhancement would improve accessibility, reduce the risk of falls, and support a client-centred approach—particularly for clients using strollers or mobility devices.

Medical Devices and Equipment

Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia (HSNS) maintains a comprehensive range of medical devices and equipment to support safe, effective, and client-centred care. As observed at the Halifax Community Clinic, all furniture and treatment surfaces are designed with wipeable materials to facilitate cleaning and infection prevention. Staff have ready access to manufacturer information and cleaning guidelines via SharePoint, ensuring equipment is cleaned and maintained according to recommended practices. A mandatory question regarding equipment cleaning is included in electronic medical record (EMR) documentation to reinforce consistent hygiene practices.

Preventive maintenance is conducted regularly by the staff technician, with additional annual inspections performed by an external consultant to ensure all devices remain functional and safe. End-of-life equipment is often retained for parts that can be upcycled for use in other devices, while discarded toys and materials are donated to the community whenever possible. Staff follow manufacturer guidelines for all cleaning and maintenance, supporting both infection control and equipment longevity.

HSNS also manages an inventory of essential clinical devices, including audiometers, treatment chairs, sound booths, and other specialized hearing and speech equipment. Laptops and mobile devices are maintained through an evergreen program to ensure consistent access to up-to-date technology.

Opportunities for improvement have been identified to further strengthen equipment management. These include establishing a centralized database to track minor repairs, preventive maintenance, annual inspections, and equipment replacements, as well as exploring options to recycle discarded wires and electronic components. HSNS continues to foster a culture of safety by promoting Just Culture principles and conducting root cause analyses of incidents related to equipment use or maintenance. Regular refresher training on proper device usage, maintenance, and infection prevention practices further supports staff competency, client safety, and ongoing quality improvement.

Table 4: Unmet Criteria for Leadership

There are no unmet criteria for this section.

Service Specific Assessment Standards

The Qmentum Global™ for Canadian Accreditation program has a set of service specific assessment standards that are included in the accreditation program based on the services delivered by different organizations. Service standards are critical to the management and delivery of high-quality and safe care in specific service areas.

Community Health Services

Standard Rating: 100.0% Met Criteria

0.0% of criteria were unmet. For further details please review the table at end of this section.

Assessment Results

Halifax Community Clinic

Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia (HSNS) Halifax Community Clinic (HCC) provides clinic-based audiology and speech-language pathology (SLP) services for adults and children. The HCC site, newly opened in June 2025, features enhanced accessibility and safety measures. HCC serves a diverse range of clients from across the Halifax Regional Municipality. An administrative support professional and an administrative professional team lead support the clinic's administrative tasks. A communication disorders technician supports the work of speech-language pathology at this site. HCC offers a range of specialized services, including serving as the tertiary site for all cochlear implant candidacy assessments and post-surgical follow-up for Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. Wait times for regular-priority clients remain an ongoing challenge at this site. To help manage the wait-list, initiatives such as a cancellation list for short-notice appointments and transferring clients to other sites have been implemented. Staff members at HCC are experienced and knowledgeable in their areas of expertise and are commended for the high quality of care they provide. It was noted that the SLP working with the autism team completes double documentation in other systems—this process should be evaluated further to improve efficiency.

New Glasgow Site

Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia (HSNS) New Glasgow provides adult and pediatric audiology, speech-language pathology (SLP), and newborn hearing screening assessments. A large majority of clients seen for SLP services at this site are children. The wait-list for services is currently manageable within the existing capacity. Given the client population, there is a strong focus on transitioning services to school-based supports as children enter the school system. The site takes pride in delivering client-centred care and actively engaging families in service provision. Clinicians at HSNS New Glasgow are highly engaged, benefit from a strong workplace support structure, and consistently provide high-quality care. Clients are appropriately referred for additional services and supports that have the potential to enhance their overall well-being.

Kentville-Valley Regional Hospital Site

Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia (HSNS) Kentville–Valley Regional Hospital site provides inpatient-based services, with all care delivered within the hospital. Two part-time speech-language pathologists (SLPs) and one full-time communication disorders technician (CDT) work at this location. While most services are provided to inpatients, the CDT also completes some newborn hearing screenings for outpatients. The SLPs report spending the majority of their time conducting swallowing assessments for inpatients. Although referrals for communication assessments are received, swallowing assessments

remain the priority. These assessments must be completed in collaboration with a dietitian, which can impact service efficiency. Additionally, the absence of protected diagnostic imaging (DI) time for modified barium swallowing assessments further affects efficiency. The team at this site is engaged and committed to maximizing their services during their time onsite. Despite having an extremely small footprint within the hospital, they continue to deliver high-quality care and make effective use of available space.

Halifax IWK

Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia (HSNS) IWK Health Centre provides in-hospital and outpatient audiology and speech-language pathology (SLP) services for children and youth. In addition to audiologists and SLPs, a clinical administrative professional and a communication disorders technician support service delivery at this location. The largest office—housing most of the audiology equipment, including sound booths—is located adjacent to the ear, nose, and throat (ENT) clinic, with two smaller offices situated on the hospital wards. A key pressure point for the children's audiology program is the wait-list, with more than 100 children awaiting care and an estimated one-year wait to be seen. Clients are prioritized based on level of need, and the program maintains a cancellation list to support earlier access when appointments become available. The offices are clean, well-organized, and the equipment is well-maintained. It is evident that staff are highly committed and responsive to the needs of children and their families. Staff are recognized for their expertise and are fully integrated into the broader care team at IWK. The HSNS IWK team is commended for its impressive collaborative approach to care, as demonstrated by the recent successful ENT proposal that resulted in the addition of an HSNS audiologist position. Furthermore, the team is recognized for its meaningful engagement of children and families throughout all stages of service delivery.

Halifax QE11 - Dickson

Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia (HSNS) QEII - Dickson provides inpatient and outpatient audiology and speech-language pathology (SLP) services for adults. The site serves clients from other hospitals and communities across—and beyond—the province. A clinical administrative professional and a communication disorders technician support service delivery at this location. HSNS offices are located adjacent to the hospital's ear, nose, and throat (ENT) program, enabling close collaboration. Services at this site include a range of specialized care related to head and neck cancer, vestibular assessment, and dysphagia. Co-located in the same area is the Voice, Upper Airway, and Oropharyngeal Swallowing Clinic—a state-of-the-art, subspecialized clinic—where HSNS staff are core members of the multidisciplinary team. Thanks to a donor and former patient of the hospital who, during his care, became aware of the importance of speech-language pathology, HSNS received a donation through the QEII Foundation. In partnership with the donor and the Foundation, a dedicated temporary SLP position was created to improve access to speech-language and swallowing care for both inpatients and outpatients. This initiative was highly successful, reducing a one-year wait-list from 100 clients to 25 within six months. HSNS staff at this site are clearly passionate about their work, committed to ongoing professional development, and champions of high-quality, client-centred care. The team is commended for its people-centred approaches, innovative practices, and strong team spirit.

Table 5: Unmet Criteria for Community Health Services

There are no unmet criteria for this section.

Service Excellence for Community Health Services

Standard Rating: 100.0% Met Criteria

0.0% of criteria were unmet. For further details please review the table at end of this section.

Assessment Results

Service excellence is central to the mission of Hearing and Speech Nova Scotia (HSNS). The organization has a standardized process to ensure proper licensing, supports an extended orientation process with mentoring, and promotes a supportive team culture. Staff members appreciate the organization's commitment to professional development activities.

HSNS's collaborative approaches—both within teams and across services—foster interdisciplinary care. Programs are structured with management support for service teams and sites. External partnerships are coordinated and supported by leadership and managers, with active staff engagement. Staff also identify opportunities for collaborative care, such as audiology and ear, nose, and throat (ENT) clinics. Processes are in place to identify the resources needed to achieve goals, including equipment requirements.

The organization is commended for its efforts to support staff with access to data and information, including research-based evidence and best practice guidance. Staff participate in Best Practice Councils to inform client care approaches and information systems. Environmental scans provide data to assist in service delivery decisions. The organization is also commended for securing the support of a data analyst to advance these activities. A culture of organizational learning is evident, with teams sharing lessons across the organization.

HSNS has a comprehensive quality care and safety plan that includes clinical measures and key priorities. Currently, accessibility measures are a priority. In response to long wait times and large wait-lists in some areas, staff have developed innovative clinical care strategies, such as virtual care and flexible scheduling. Staff use Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycles to test and refine ideas based on real feedback. Outcomes of these service changes include reduced wait times.

Table 6: Unmet Criteria for Service Excellence for Community Health Services

There are no unmet criteria for this section.