Let's Make Healthy Change Happen.

Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) Narrative for Health Care Organizations in Ontario

SouthlakeHealth

3/25/2025

This document is intended to provide health care organizations in Ontario with guidance as to how they can develop a Quality Improvement Plan. While much effort and care has gone into preparing this document, this document should not be relied on as legal advice and organizations should consult with their legal, governance and other relevant advisors as appropriate in preparing their quality improvement plans. Furthermore, organizations are free to design their own public quality improvement plans using alternative formats and contents, provided that they submit a version of their quality improvement plan to Health Quality Ontario (if required) in the format described herein.

Overview

For 100 years and counting, Southlake has built healthy communities through leading edge care with an unwavering pride for people, place, and performance. Over the years, Southlake has evolved into one of Canada's top healthcare organizations. It is more than a single centre. It is a network of expertise, compassion, and excellence that delivers health and wellness, close to home.

With 6,000 staff, medical staff, volunteers, and learners, as well as an operating budget in excess of $600 million, Southlake operates several sites to deliver care to patients across northern York Region and southern Simcoe County. It also provides specialized cardiac and cancer care to patients as far north as Muskoka and as far south as North York through its regional programs.

To chart the next 10 years of care, we were proud to unveil a new *Strategy For The Decade Ahead* that leverages expertise learned over the past century to build a Distributed Health Network that provides leading edge care, closer to home as the newly named – Southlake Health.

The municipalities Southlake serves are among the fastest growing and aging in the province, and without any material acute care expansion in over 20 years, Southlake has become an epicentre of hallway healthcare in Ontario.

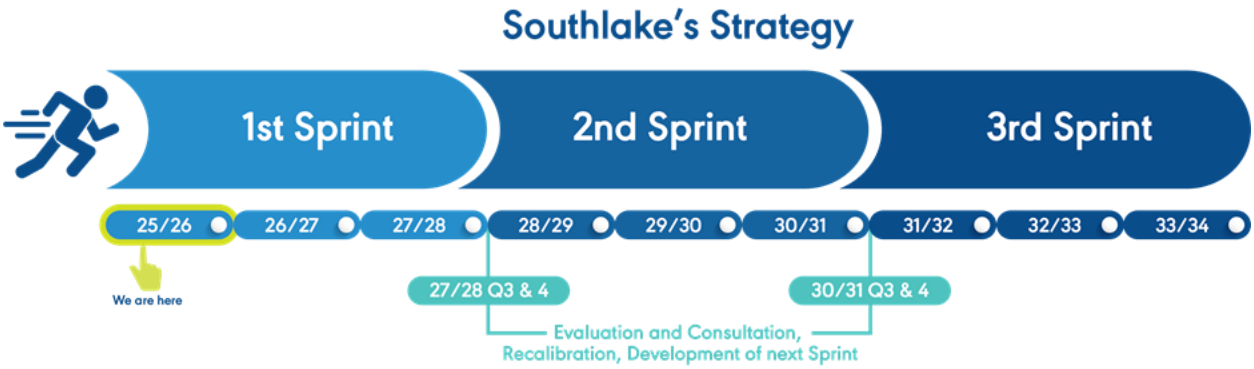
Central to the challenges that Southlake and many other hospitals in Ontario face are two realities:

1. Geography – our core catchment area is nearly 1,200 square kilometres and our tertiary regional programs cover a much larger area.
2. Capacity – our buildings are too small and too old which prevents us from serving more patients.

However, Southlake Health believes we can use our first challenge – geography – to help solve our second – capacity – in order to increase access to care. By transforming our organization through key Population Health Management principles to foster Quintuple Aim improvements, we can provide the right care in the right location, reduce overcrowding, and ensure long-term sustainability by evolving into a Distributed Health Network (DHN).

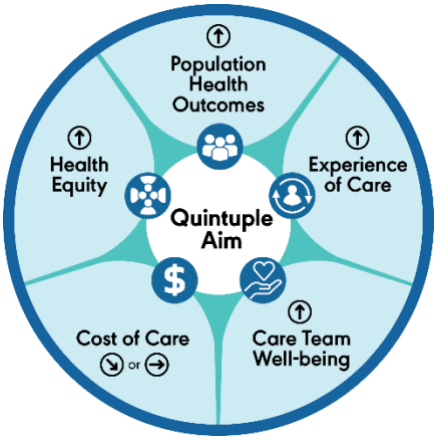
Five Strategic Priorities have been identified as areas of focus to strengthen Southlake and set us up for success as we bring the DHN vision to life. Five key Enablers will serve as drivers to empower our progress on our strategic priorities.

The new strategy is designed to achieve success through focused three-year sprints of activity, segmenting and sequencing our strategic imperatives to support effective care and efficient care, while partnering with patients/families in decision making to ensure optimal health outcomes. Each sprint will have an evaluative component ensuring a reflective and learning approach to our environment, system pressures, community opportunities, and alignment with the provincial landscape.



Our accomplishments in 2024: Southlake has had several accomplishments in 2024, with staff, physician, learners, volunteers, and Patient Experience Partners committed to providing 'Leading Edge Care. Closer to Home'. Below is a snapshot of some high points in 2024.

1. **Accreditation:** In 2024, Southlake underwent Accreditation achieving exemplary standing (4th cycle in a row) once again. As a learning organization, we are committed to quality and safety every day, aligning with the quintuple aim and focusing on better care, better system access and care closer to home. The quintuple aim is embedded within our strategy, strategic priorities and guides us on how we approach healthcare in Northern York and South Simcoe Region. As we enter into our next accreditation cycle, we will embed the quintuple aim in all that we do.



2. **ACS NSQIP® - Surgical Program:** For the third consecutive year, the American College of Surgeons recognized Southlake Health for surgical excellence in 2024. This international recognition makes Southlake one of six hospitals in Ontario to achieve meritorious outcomes in both categories in the American College of Surgeons' National Surgical Quality Improvement Program (ACS NSQIP®). Of the 609 North American hospitals that participate in the program, only 43 hospitals were recognized in both categories.

ACS NSQIP participants track the outcomes of inpatient and outpatient surgical procedures, collecting data that assesses patient safety and informs improvements in surgical care. Southlake is among the elite hospitals to achieve meritorious outcomes in both the “All Cases” and “High Risk” categories, a testament to its unwavering commitment to patient care and clinical excellence. Southlake’s continued success is rooted in its ability to not only meet but exceed international standards, year after year. By analyzing surgical data and identifying opportunities for improvement, Southlake is proud to lead the way.

Southlake Health has consistently ranked among the top hospitals for surgical outcomes, with a focus on innovative procedures, patient safety, and clinical excellence. These outcomes are a result of a team effort that includes surgeons, anesthesiologists, nurses, allied health, and support staff — all of whom are committed to providing leading edge care, close to home.

3. **Amplifying our Population Health Strategy:** Population Health Management is a well-established evidence-based approach to drive improvements along each aspect of the Quintuple Aim. Population Health Management challenges us to think proactively about everyone who lives in our communities and work with our partners to design a system that meets their needs.

By adopting Population Health Management as a core operating system, Southlake Health will learn from and partner with leading healthcare systems from around the world to ensure we can make the most significant impact for northern York Region and southern Simcoe County.

This year alone we have made strides in addressing population health through formalized partnerships with municipalities and the Northern York South Simcoe Ontario Health Team (NYSS OHT). Southlake has recently signed Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with the town of Georgina and Bradford West Gwillimbury to advance strategies that bring leading edge care, closer to home. This newly formed partnership will support the co-design of "made in community health strategies". This work will be the roadmap for future partnerships and scaled to other communities to meet local healthcare needs.

Southlake continues to forge new paths, champion a culture of exemplary care, create optimal patient experiences, and own our role in improving the healthcare system. These foundational principles reinforce our commitment to continuous improvement and guide our pursuit of the highest standards of care. We take pride in our people, place and performance, and with our new strategy; we are confident that the community will thrive and our focus on care closer to home will be a model for other organizations to emulate.

Access and Flow

Ensuring timely and equitable access to care remains one of the most critical challenges for healthcare systems across the country. At Southlake Health, our commitment to improving access and flow is driven by a deep understanding of patient needs, system-wide demands, the need for more effective partnerships, and the ever-evolving healthcare landscape. In alignment with our strategic priorities, we have implemented robust initiatives aimed at addressing capacity constraints, reducing wait times, and enhancing patient transitions across care settings. The two new key initiatives are:

1. Integrated CARE Centre
2. Distributed Health Network (DHN)

Integrated CARE Centre - Driving Real-Time Decision-Making: Southlake will soon be opening our new Integrated CARE Centre (**C**are Management, **A**ccess, **R**eal-Time, **E**ngagement). This represents a transformative approach to addressing access and flow challenges using a centralized hub for real-time operational oversight. The Centre will operate 7-days a week/24 hours a day to leverage advanced technologies and analytics to monitor hospital activity in real-time. Additionally, we have focused on internal and external integration whereby OntarioHealth@home and Southlake@home staff will work in the Centre as part of the team, to proactively address pressures across the organization and, in the future, across the community.

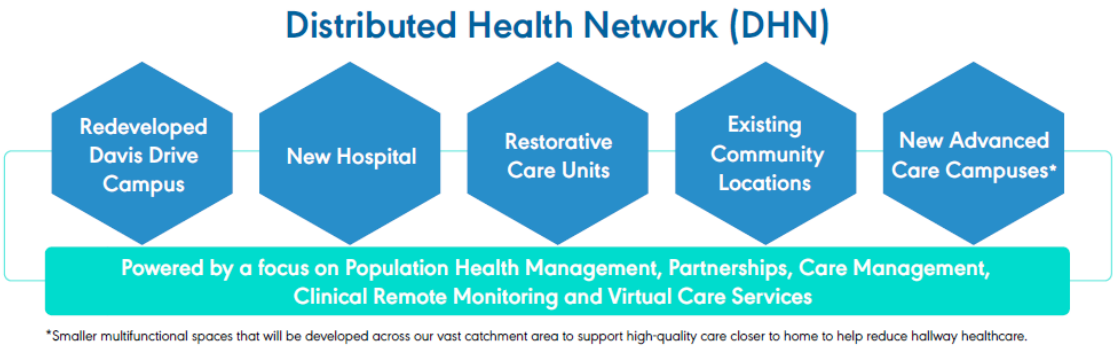
Key functions of the Integrated CARE Centre include:

- *Real-Time Capacity Management:* By continuously tracking bed availability, patient admissions, and discharge activities, the Centre enables timely interventions to prevent bottlenecks and reduce gridlock.

- *Escalation Protocols*: With clear triggers and escalation pathways, the Centre ensures swift responses during high-demand periods, including activating surge plans and reallocating resources as needed.

- *Integrated Communication:* Acting as a central communication hub, the Centre fosters collaboration among clinical teams, housekeeping, and patient transport services to accelerate patient movement and optimize workflows.

Distributed Health Network: Our new strategy is centred on transforming Southlake Health into what we are calling a Distributed Health Network (DHN). The DHN is a new way to organize and deliver care across our broad geographic catchment area. Services will be spread throughout the municipalities we serve. Acute hospital-based care will be delivered at a redeveloped Davis Drive site, as well as at a new hospital (currently in the planning stages). Services that don't need to be provided in a hospital setting will be delivered at Advanced Care Campuses, multifunctional spaces that will be developed to support high-quality care closer to home to help reduce hallway healthcare. The DHN enables innovative care models that extend beyond the hospital walls, creating a seamless continuum of care for patients.



Key DHN components we are planning for next include:

- **Extensivist Clinic**: This clinic facilitates and coordinates care for patients with complex and chronic conditions, with a positive downstream outcome of reducing hospital readmissions and supporting better long-term outcomes. The objective of the clinic is to prevent unnecessary admissions and ED visits and improve Quintuple Aim outcomes.

- **Virtual Care**: Next year we are planning to develop a comprehensive virtual care strategy to bring together existing virtual services and plan in an integrated way for new ones. A centralized virtual care service can improve access, reduce unnecessary ED visits and readmissions and improve patient experience.

- **Hospital@Home Program**: Leveraging the DHN's real-time monitoring capabilities, next year we will be planning to grow our successful first-in-the-province Southlake@home program to create a Virtual Unit to provide acute-level care to patients from their home. Advanced remote care monitoring will enable effective and safe care, with staff in our Integrated CARE Centre managing the care of patients at home.

Through these initiatives, the DHN will transform the way care is delivered, assist in our challenges in access and flow, and ensuring that patients receive the right care at the right time, regardless of their location.

Our commitment to improving access and flow through innovative strategies like the DHN and Command Centre will yield measurable benefits, including reduced wait times, improved discharge rates, and enhanced patient and provider satisfaction. As we look to 2025/26, our focus will remain on implementing the DHN initiatives, deepening partnerships, and leveraging technology to build a resilient and responsive healthcare system. By prioritizing access and flow, we reaffirm our mission to deliver exceptional care closer to home, ensuring that every patient receives the right care, at the right time, in the right place.

Equity and Indigenous Health

Our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Office fosters equitable, inclusive and culturally safe services. Southlake is committed to advancing health equity by addressing systemic racism and the social determinants of health to reduce health inequities for underrepresented populations.

Southlake has implemented two provincial frameworks:

1. Ontario Health's Equity, Inclusion, Diversity and Anti-racism Framework (EIDA-R); and
2. Ontario Health's First Nations, Inuit, Métis, and Urban Indigenous Health Framework

These frameworks and action plans are designed to guide transformative change, specifically to combat systemic racism and foster an equitable and inclusive environment for our staff, patients and families. Our goal is to integrate DEI principles throughout the organization, ensuring a holistic approach. We continue to build relationships and collaborate with our local indigenous community to better understand their experience at Southlake, provide supports within the organization to honour traditions, and support advocacy. We provide ongoing cultural competency training and work closely with our Indigenous Patient Navigator to improve patient care for our indigenous patient population. Additionally, we offer training and education opportunities on topics such as Anti-black racism, unconscious bias and other DEI-related topics.

We provide culturally safe, affirming, and equitable healthcare, with significant involvement from the Indigenous, black, 2SLGBTQI+ communities and people with disabilities. Our ongoing learning and engagement opportunities of enables staff, to understand the barriers and inequities underrepresented communities face when accessing health care.

To facilitate effective communication between patients and care providers where English may not be the primary language, we provide interpretation and translation services. We also collect utilization data by language to gain a better understanding of the community we serve, as well as religious and faith-based data to help support our spiritual care services.

We will continue to work with our staff, patients, families and communities to advance health equity and improve patient outcomes.

Patient/Client/Resident Experience

As an organization committed to delivering the highest standard of care and creating the best experiences for our patients and care partners, we recognize the invaluable role patients and families' feedback offers in shaping and improving the quality of our services. Actively seeking and embracing this feedback is an integral part of our commitment to People-Centred Care. We believe in the power of collaboration and co-design, where the experiences and perspectives of our patients and their care partners contribute directly to service improvements.

In July 2023, Southlake took a significant step forward by launching Qualtrics as our patient experience measurement survey management tool. Through this innovative partnership, we empower our leaders with real-time data, enabling them to make informed decisions when responding to emerging opportunities to improve patient and care partner experiences at point of care. In the past year we have seen a 5-fold increase in the number of responses across the organization, better capturing the perspectives of our community. We recognize that the journey has just commenced, and we need to ensure all our community provides perspectives are captured to improve patient experiences and outcomes. This upcoming year there will be a renewed focus on increasing response rates by partnering with our volunteers and Patient and Family Advisory Committee (PFAC) to ensure diverse perspectives are captured. This commitment to seek out feedback, transparently address feedback and share information, reinforces our dedication to continuous enhancement in the care we provide.

We take pride in our engaged Patient and Family Advisory Councils throughout the organization. These councils serve as collaborative platforms where patients and their families actively inform decision-making processes. Our Patient and Family Advisors played a pivotal role in the transformation of our patient and retail food services, contributing to the expansion of services, enhancing variety, and the overall patient experience through a refreshed service offering.

Collectively, these initiatives underscore our commitment to listening to the voices of our patients, families, and care partners to incorporate their insights into our continuous improvement strategies. Through these collaborative efforts, we strive to provide an experience that reflects our core values.

Our commitment to People-Centred Care is an ongoing journey. By reinforcing the power of feedback, fostering collaboration with patients and families, and leveraging technology, Southlake continues to drive patient-centred improvements that elevate the care experience for all.

Provider Experience

At Southlake, our greatest assets and source of pride are our people. We have made great strides for our staff to ensure that they are healthy and safe while at work. From the provision of on-site massages to free memberships to the gym, we value employee and physician health and well-being. More recently, we have embarked on a journey to implement the National Standard for Psychological Health and Safety within the organization to further boost morale, as well as cope with several versions of burnout amongst staff as they come out of the pandemic.

We have successfully initiated phase one of our people strategy, concentrating on cultivating a work environment where individuals feel valued, supported, empowered, and engaged. We are actively recognizing and appreciating the contributions of each team member to help foster a sense of importance and satisfaction. Recognizing our people through our annual Champion Awards, Loyalty Awards, and the Shout Out program remains a key focus at Southlake. These programs are essential in acknowledging the hard work, dedication, and achievements of our team members.

This past year, our Occupational Health and Safety program developed and implemented the Resilience in Stressful Events (R.I.S.E.) program for Southlake; only the third of such programs in Canada. Originally from John Hopkins, the program was developed to provide support to caregivers (clinical and non-clinical staff) experiencing stressful and/or psychologically impactful events. The program was focused for the 'second victim' when incidents occurred in hospital, to address self-doubt, burnout or compassion fatigue. Southlake implemented R.I.S.E., to ensure a safe and confidential space was available for workers experiencing workplace stress or stressful events. The program provides 'psychological first aid' to workers in the moment or shortly thereafter through a mentorship peer program. There are 35 trained peer/volunteer responders comprised of all health disciplines and non-clinical staff to provide support when needed 365 days a year, 24 hours a day. We launched February 1st, 2025, and will be evaluating the program as it progresses.

As we continue to look forward in supporting our physicians and staff, we are partnering with the Canadian Mental health Association (CMHA) Your Health Space to bring trainers on-site this spring to deliver Wellness Moments.

Southlake also continues to support professional development and career advancement approaches, offering tailored training and mentorship programs that cater to our staff's diverse needs and aspirations. We continue to offer a Frontline Leaders program that creates opportunities for our frontline staff to enhance skills, network, and develop leadership. This program is designed to empower staff with the tools and knowledge they need to excel in their roles and to inspire others. It includes workshops, mentorship opportunities, and collaborative projects that focus on leadership development, communication skills, and team management.

Safety

Southlake is committed to maintaining a safe environment where our patients receive the highest quality of care. Our continued targeted approach to improving safety over the past year has set a strong foundation for ongoing improvement and it has shown us how the power of many helps us achieve our goals. Our Wound and Skin Committee Working Group and Best Practice Guideline team have made significant strides in preventing Pressure Injuries (PI), evidenced by a continued decrease in prevalence in the first two quarters of 24/25 fiscal year. While we recognize that some pressure injuries are challenging to avoid (e.g., patients who are medically fragile), our interprofessional practice team provides ongoing education to clinical staff on pressure injury prevention. Our focus over the past year has been on moisture management, using the correct surface, and decreasing the number of layers beneath the patient. Our 'lose the brief' campaign continues to garner traction in the prevention of moisture-related pressure injuries.

Additionally, recognizing the importance of preventing falls, we have revamped our falls risk assessment tool and prevention strategy. Engaging frontline staff in the process, we have adopted the John Hopkins Falls risk assessment tool, ensuring a more tailored and individualized approach to risk mitigation. Along with this new risk assessment rollout, a toolkit was provided for staff which included information on fall prevention. This strategic shift has contributed to a decrease in our overall falls rate.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to fostering a culture of safety and excellence in care at Southlake by employing different tools (e.g., Press Ganey Serious Safety Event Classification System) to focus on system improvements, creating a psychologically safe environment, evaluating our practices and fully partnering with our Patient Experience Partners to co-design solutions. We are committed to ensuring that patient safety and quality care are at the forefront of everything we do.

Palliative Care

Palliative care is a team approach to care that is appropriate for a patient and/or family member living with a life-limiting illness or needing end-of-life care. Palliative care relieves suffering and improves quality of life for people of any age and at any stage in a serious illness. Palliative practices are present whether the illness is curable, chronic or life threatening. Our palliative care practices provide each patient and their loved ones with respect, dignity, and an individualized care plan that meets their specific needs.
Southlake has a Hospice Palliative Care Team (HPCT) which is the Regional Palliative Care Program for south Simcoe County, York Region and North York. This compassionate, highly skilled team works together to bring care directly to patients wherever they may live, including their home, retirement home, group home or long-term care residence.
In 25/26, as part of our Year 1 Plan associated with our new strategy, we will be planning for an comprehensive integrated palliative care pathway for Southlake.

Population Health Management

Population Health Management (PHM) is a well-established, evidence-based approach to drive improvements along each aspect of the Quintuple Aim. Population Health Management challenges us to think proactively about everyone who lives in our communities and work with our partners to design a system that meets their needs. According to the World Health Organization, the key principles of Population Health Management are:

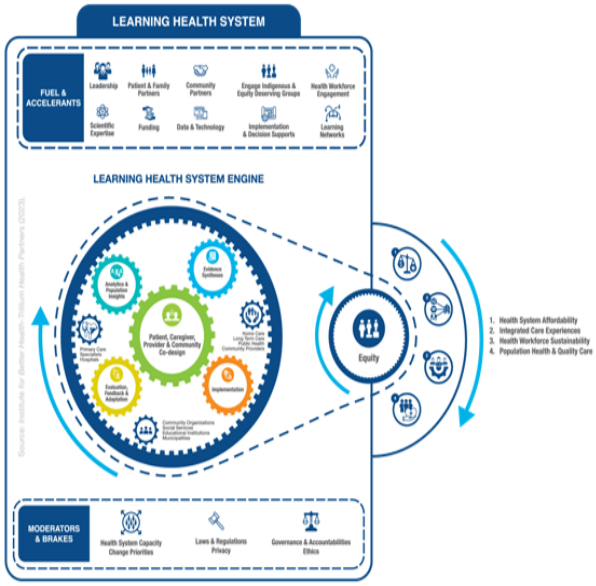
- Defining and identifying the population we serve
- Understanding their healthcare needs
- Proactive modeling and evidence-based care planning
- Delivering tailored services
- Focusing on continuous evaluation and improvement

As we continue to focus on Population Health Management as a core operating system in our new strategy, Southlake Health will learn from and partner with leading healthcare systems from around the world to ensure we can make the most significant impact for northern York Region and southern Simcoe County.

As part of our strategy, we will be deploying the Learning Health System approach to thoughtfully integrate insightful accelerants such as research and academics to refine our operations in a sustainable manner and drive improved population health management.

Refined at the Institute for Better Health at Trillium Health Partners, the Learning Health System Action Framework is designed to accelerate improvement through five “Learning Gears”:

i. Advanced Analytics and Population Insights
ii. Evidence Syntheses and Curation
iii. Patient, Caregiver and Provider Co-Design
iv. Implementation and Reach
v. Rapid Cycle Evaluation, Feedback and Adaption



Additionally, we will be embarking upon key initiatives to ensure Population Health is embedded into all that we do. They include:

1. Formation of a Population Health Management and Analytics Working Group that will guide PHM education and implementation across the organization and the surrounding system.
2. Leadership training in Population Health Management that will interactively increase the knowledge of PHM for all organizational leaders with a goal of embedding these principles into operational practices.
3. Establishing foundational partnerships with Georgina and Bradford West Gwillimbury through Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) to support co-design of "made in community health strategies" that align with the principles of PHM.

PHM integration in acute care systems is critical for ensuring better health outcomes, increased capacity and greater resilience within communities. Southlake’s commitment to PHM through the Distributed Health Network will achieve this in the next decade, becoming an exemplar program for others to model after.

Emergency Department Return Visit Quality Program (EDRVQP)

Return to the Emergency Department within 72 hours is a concern for hospitals, physicians and care teams alike, as often it is suggestive of quality issues in the management of care. Southlake’s Emergency Department Return Visit Quality Program is overseen by our team of emergency department physicians. A regular review, through auditing of charts is conducted to better understand where opportunities for improvement can occur, as well as understanding through root cause analysis challenges that exist. All qualifying cases, those with a hospital admission within 72 hours of the ED visit, are sent to ED physicians for review. The cases are then reviewed by a broader team, including our nurse educators and ED nursing staff. From this discussion, quality issues and adverse events are identified and brought forward for action by multiple means, such as through education, policy and procedure changes, in order to improve access and services for our community. Southlake's left without being seen rate is amongst the lowest in the province, with an average rate of approximately 0.8%, compared to the provincial average of approximately 5%. We continue to focus on quality care through technology, advanced certifications of physicians/staff and a learning mindset.

Executive Compensation

Our executives play important leadership roles in driving quality improvement efforts, and they help enhance accountability for the delivery of our quality improvement priorities. As such, a portion of their annual compensation is directly linked to achieving the targets set out in our Quality Improvement Plan, through a performance-based compensation model. All four indicators on the 2024/25 QIP are linked to executive compensation and equally weighed.

The executive team members at Southlake include:

- President and Chief Executive Officer
- Chief of Staff
- Executive Vice President, Clinical, Chief Operating Officer & Regional Vice President, Cancer Services
- Executive Vice President, Quality, Professional Practice, Patient Experience and Chief Nursing Executive
- Vice President, Facilities & Business Development
- Vice President, Strategy, Analytics and Communications
- Vice President, Digital Health and Diagnostics
- Vice President, Finance and Chief Financial Officer
- Vice President, People and Chief Human Resources Officer
- Vice President, Medical Affairs

Contact Information/Designated Lead

For QIP inquiries, please contact:
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Other

Quality improvement is an endless journey. Southlake continues to embrace change as we strive to provide the best experience and outcome for everyone. Thank you for taking the time to read our Quality Improvement Plan.

Sign-off

It is recommended that the following individuals review and sign-off on your organization's Quality Improvement Plan (where applicable):

I have reviewed and approved our organization's Quality Improvement Plan

Board Chair _____ (signature)
Board Quality Committee Chair _____ (signature)
Chief Executive Officer _____ (signature)
EDRVQP lead, if applicable _____ (signature)