



2020/21 Results

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How we work Third year results Top complaints Spotlight

Listening, Learning, Leading

YEAR 3 HIGHLIGHTS



Patient Ombudsman is a champion for fairness in Ontario's healthcare system.

In our third year, we continued to receive more complaints and achieved more resolutions to improve healthcare experiences for all Ontarians. We believe that all experiences matter and that complaints about healthcare provide important information that can drive positive change.

How we work

Patient Ombudsman is a young organization, and we often hear that people are not aware of the help we can offer when they have problems with their healthcare.

As we look forward to the appointment of a new Patient Ombudsman in 2023, we continue to reach out to patient and caregiver groups and health providers to raise awareness of our services.

In our third year Patient Ombudsman staff visited 7 communities across the province and met with 26 stakeholder groups. We are also committed to ongoing learning and skills development. We welcomed subject matter experts to enhance our internal expertise on just some of the following:

- Supporting Indigenous identified complainants as they navigate our complaints resolution service in a culturally competent manner
- Supporting our own staff to build their internal resilience as they work with complainants in distress and living with a mental illness
- Palliative care and advanced care planning initiatives in hospitals
- The structure of pain specialist clinics and referral processes coordinated by public hospitals, and
- Gleaning insight into the work and unique processes of other ombuds offices, regulatory colleges and oversight agencies.

As we work with patients, caregivers and health sector organizations to resolve their concerns and improve healthcare, we are also focused on engaging the services we offer and are listening to the feedback we receive. In our first two years, we heard from some that our resolution process took too long.

This year, we undertook a comprehensive review of our internal processes to respond to what we heard and learned from the experience of our front-line team. We reviewed how complaints are received and managed by our office with a view to increasing efficiency and eliminating unnecessary steps. Based on what we learned, we completed a re-design of our complaint management information system and introduced the changes in June 2019. To ensure that we can continue to produce high quality data, we developed a data dictionary, introduced data quality audits, and provided training for the Patient Ombudsman team.

Service Charter

We also heard that patients, caregivers and health sector organizations wanted to better understand how we work.

They wanted to know what they can expect from us, what we expect from them and how they can most effectively engage with us. We consulted with patient and caregiver advisory groups and patient relations representatives of health sector organizations to develop and implement a service charter that describes how we work with patients, caregivers and health sector organizations to find the resolutions to complaints. The Patient Ombudsman Service Charter was introduced in the winter of 2019 and we have shared it widely with patients, caregivers and health providers.

Patients and caregivers

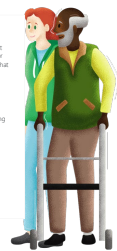


We will:

- Make sure that our service is easy to access
- Respect your experience
- Listen to your complaint and concerns
- Explain what we can do to help
- Direct you to the right place if we can't help
- Seek a fair resolution to your complaint
- Keep you informed and communicate our decisions clearly
- Welcome your feedback so we can improve

You will:

- First try to formally resolve your complaint with the hospital, long-term care home, or Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) that you're complaining about
- Share all important facts and information about your complaint
- Recognize we are impartial and are looking for fairness from all sides
- Contact us with questions about your complaint
- Treat us with respect
- Let us know how we could improve your experience with us



Health sector organizations

(Public hospitals, long-term care homes, and home care)



We will:

- Clearly explain our role, process and expectations
- Ensure you have a meaningful opportunity to resolve the complaint
- Work with you to set reasonable timelines
- Be thorough and fair in our review
- Ask for specific information (policies, evidence & documentation)
- Keep you informed and explain our decisions
- Be open to innovative and creative solutions

You will:

- Respect our staff, process and timelines
- Explain your process and decisions
- Provide the information we ask for
- Contact us with any questions or concerns
- Respond to our suggestions and recommendations
- Let us know how we can improve your experience with us



Results in our third year

Patient Ombudsman received a total of 2,479 complaints in our third year, a 5% increase over the previous year. This includes 1,766 complaint enquiries received by phone or in-person and 653 formal written complaints.

As in our first two years, the majority (82%) of complaints about health sector organizations within Patient Ombudsman's mandate were about public hospitals. This was followed by home and community care coordinated by Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) (16%) and long-term care homes (2%).

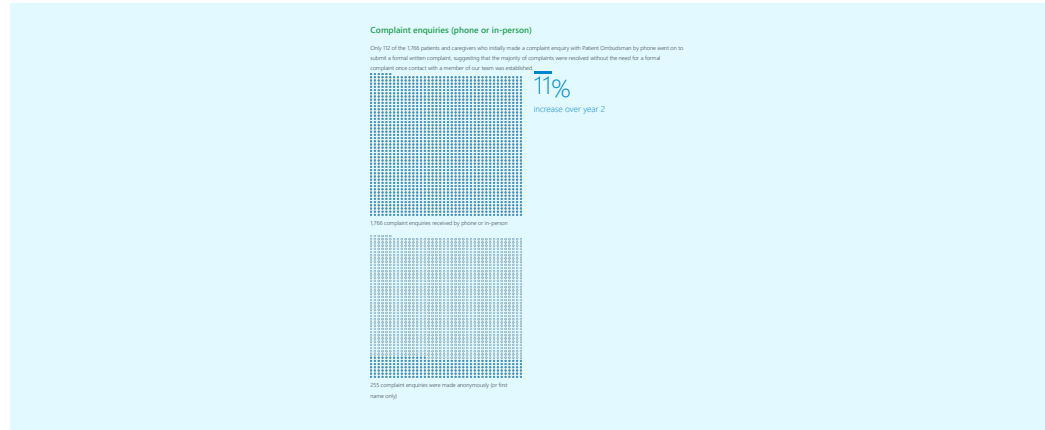
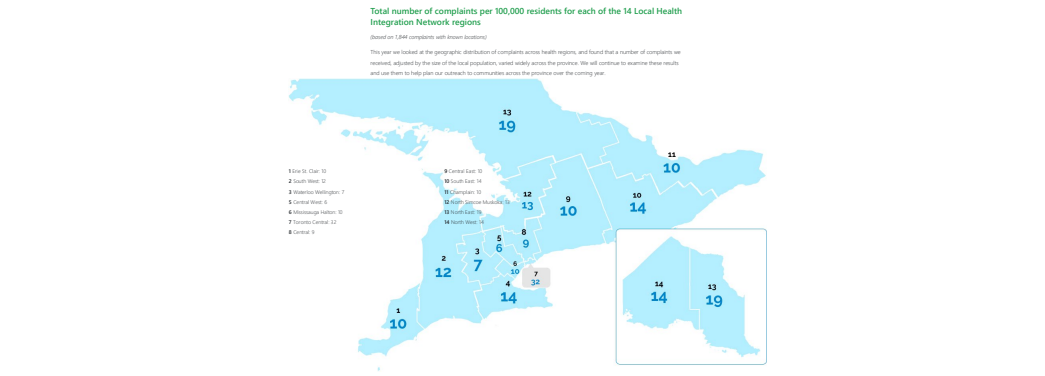
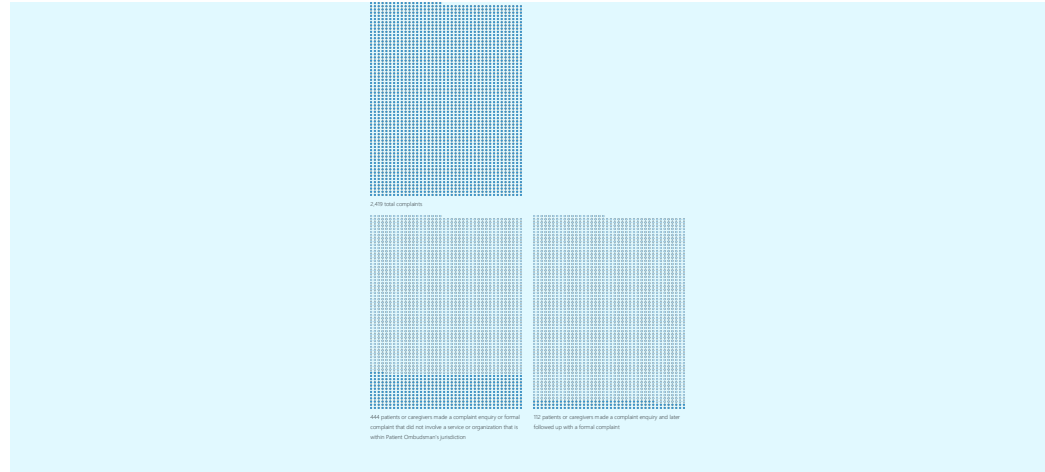
95% of complaints were about health care services and providers that are outside of Patient Ombudsman's jurisdiction. Complaints are often complex and involve many issues, some of which are within the Patient Ombudsman's mandate and others that fall under the mandate of other oversight bodies, such as health professional regulatory colleges, the Information and Privacy Commissioner or the Ontario Ombudsman. Patient Ombudsman carefully endorses each complaint to ensure a comprehensive response. Where appropriate, Patient Ombudsman helps patients and families to navigate to a body or organization that can address their concern or parts of it. Our advice is, if you're not sure, call us. If we can't help, we'll try to find someone who can. In all, Patient Ombudsman made over 2,000 referrals to other organizations, professional colleges and other resources to help patients and caregivers fully resolve their complaints. However, for some complainants, there is no one that provides independent oversight over their concerns — a consideration for future planning.

In our third year, a significant proportion, 207 (77%) of complaints were from patients and caregivers who raised concerns about access to or experience with mental health and addictions services. Many of these complaints were from patients and caregivers who experienced delays or a lack of specialized services in their communities. We also heard from people who had difficulty accessing other health services, such as primary care, as a result of their mental health conditions.

Patient Ombudsman will continue to monitor and report on our mental health and addictions related complaints.

All complaints

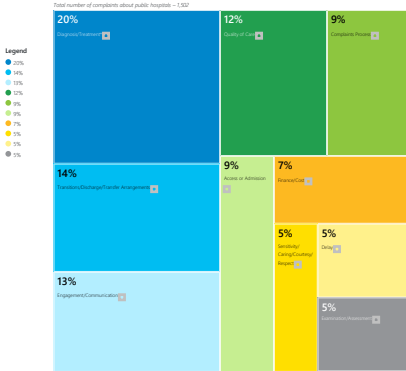
5%
increase over year 2



What did patients and caregivers complain about?

While the nature of complaints to Patient Ombudsman vary by sector, this year there were a number of common concerns about public hospitals, LHINs and community care and long-term care homes. All three bits of the most frequent types of complaints include access or admission to services, concerns about communication and patient engagement, and complaints about health sector organizations' internal complaint processes.

Complaints by Health Sector Organization
Top 10 types of complaints about public hospitals



Percentage of complaints by hospital group:

33%

Academic Teaching

45%

Large Community

7%

Small Community

5%

Referral/Complex Care

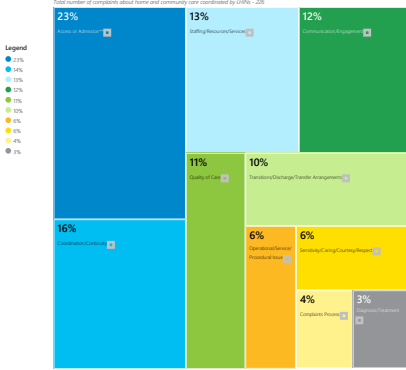
6%

Specialty Psych

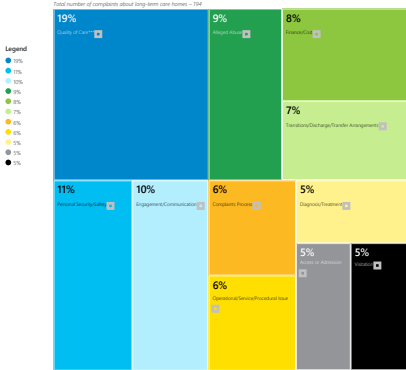
5%

Unknown

Top 10 types of complaints about home and community care



Top 10 types of complaints about long-term care homes



How were complaints resolved?

In resolving complaints, Patient Ombudsman listens to all sides and works with complainants and health sector organizations to achieve a fair result.

In many cases, helping patients connect or re-connect with the patient relations representative at their health care organization is the best way to resolve their concerns. Patient Ombudsman made almost 800 referrals and courtesy calls to patient relations representatives. In other cases, Patient Ombudsman determines that health sector organizations have already taken reasonable steps and no further action is required. In 138 cases, health sector organizations undertook improvements in response to a review that resulted in suggestions from Patient Ombudsman.

Patient Ombudsman received 100 complaints in year 3 from patients or caregivers who felt they had unfairly been charged on payments or fees by hospitals or long-term care homes. Similar complaints were received in our first two years. To date, over \$81,000 in fees have been voluntarily waived or reduced by health sector organizations following review by Patient Ombudsman.

Resolutions

128 cases

in which health sector organization made changes to address the concern brought forward by the patient or caregiver.

Over \$82,000

in fees have been voluntarily waived or reduced by health sector organizations following review by Patient Ombudsman.

Over 2,000 referrals

made to other complaints bodies, provincial organizations or health services.

The Top 10 referrals:

797

Patient Relations

447

College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario

126

College of Nurses of Ontario

100

Ministry of Health/Ministry of Long-Term Care

94

Ontario Ombudsman

81

Information and Privacy Commissioner

51

Other Regulatory College

42

Law Society of Ontario - Larger Referral Service

35

Ontario Human Rights Commission/Referral

32

Local Health Integration Network

Monitoring complaint trends and clusters

By monitoring and sharing a light on trends and consistent clusters of complaints, Patient Ombudsman hopes to encourage health sector organizations to review their policies and practices and seek opportunities to improve the care experiences of patients and caregivers. This year Patient Ombudsman is highlighting four spotlight issues.

Spotlight issues:





Meeting patients' needs for personal support services in a system without enough personal support workers



Long-Term Care Home Placement from Hospitals – finding the right balance for patients and the healthcare system



Confusion about the hospital chronic care co-payment



The critical importance of effective communication in positive patient experiences