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**North West LHIN – December 23, 2010**

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**Home First: A Change in Philosophy**

*Home First* is a new philosophy being implemented by the provincial LHINs to address patient flow issues. The North West LHIN is working with hospitals and the North West Community Care Access Centre on the adoption of *Home First*. As in many jurisdictions throughout the province, the North West LHIN has a number of people waiting in hospital beds for ‘alternate levels of care’, particularly for long-term Care. This situation creates challenges for health system resources and, more importantly, the quality of life experience for individuals needing health care support.

The *Home First* philosophy is grounded in the belief that people come into hospital for needed care and should go “home first” once the acute phase of their hospital stay is complete, before any longer term decisions are made about their ongoing care. This approach supports improved quality of care with services being delivered in the appropriate setting while also reducing risk of hospital transmitted infection and worsening health conditions associated with prolonged hospital stays. Most importantly, it allows the patient to make longer term decisions in their home environment, where they are better able to consider the impact of a significant life transition such as moving to long-term care.

*Home First* leverages North West LHIN investments in enhanced community resources and actively promotes a shift in culture regarding the care and flow of elderly patients. Specifically, investments in Smooth Transitions, Nurse Led Outreach, Transitional Care, Interim Long Term Care, Supportive Housing, Respite and enhanced Community Care Access Centre services including Wait at Home and increased home care help support faster discharge safely back to the community.

Successful adoption of this approach involves multiple partners working together in new ways. For example, in Thunder Bay, Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre, St. Joseph’s Care Group and the North West Community Care Access Centre (NW CCAC) are working together on the *Home First* approach and are collaborating to develop discharge plans. In Kenora, the North West LHIN is working with Lake of the Woods District Hospital, the NW CCAC, Supportive Housing and community support service providers to identify barriers to discharge of patients and to identify processes and opportunities to support adoption of a *Home First* approach.

