

THE VALUABLE ROLE OF THE EMBEDDED PATIENT PARTNER:

Developing the Infrastructure to Become an Engagement Capable Environment

ENGAGEMENT CAPABLE ENVIRONMENTS

Engagement capable environments understand the importance of relationship building throughout engagement efforts, and the dynamics of preparing all involved (patients, families, and caregivers, as well as staff/providers and healthcare leaders) to engage and partner in purposeful and meaningful ways.

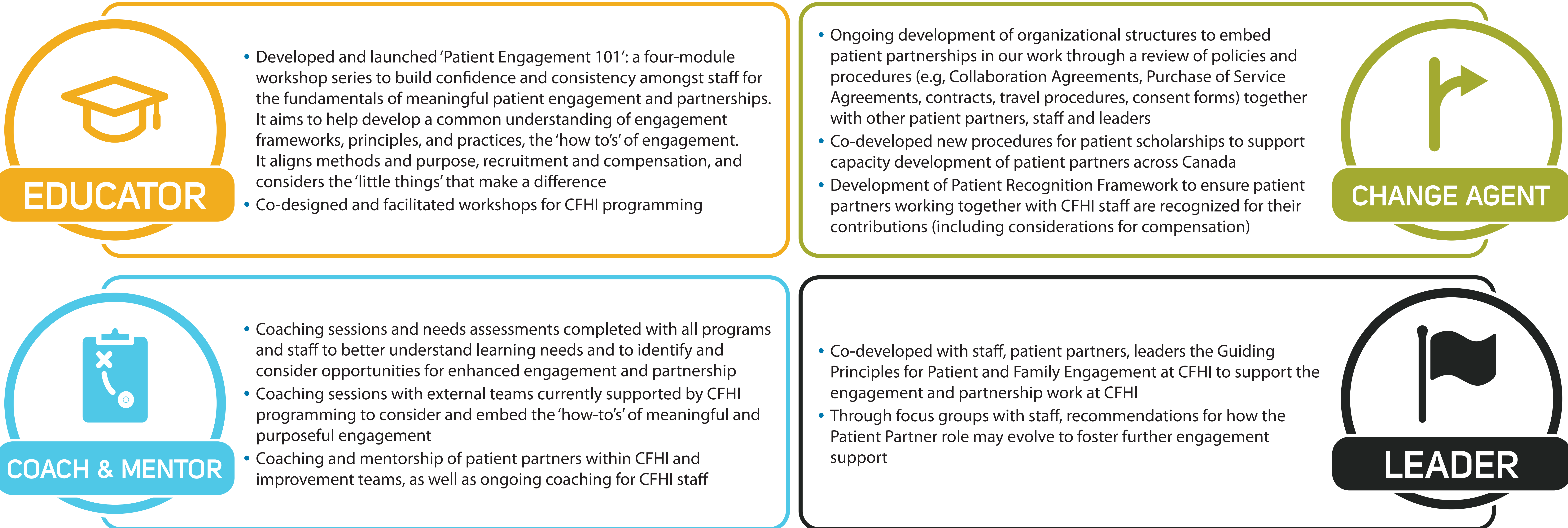
OUR ENGAGEMENT JOURNEY

The Canadian Foundation for Healthcare Improvement (CFHI) is a pan-Canadian organization that has supported meaningful engagement of patients and families in the design, implementation, and evaluation of healthcare improvement. Since 2010, CFHI has supported 67 improvement teams across Canada, in a variety of disciplines, to build capacity in patient and family engagement for quality improvement, policy change, and system redesign. More recently, CFHI has continued to support more than 200 healthcare teams in a variety of programs to build their capacity to become 'engagement capable environments' - ensuring patients, families, and caregivers are embedded into improvement teams to support and influence change.

CFHI aims to model the engagement and partnership behaviours we teach in our learning collaboratives. Through this commitment to **walk the talk**, we have worked towards the ongoing involvement of patient partners in all CFHI programs and activities. The staff role of 'Patient Partner' was inaugurated within CFHI in 2017, to lead capacity building efforts of CFHI staff to enable consistent and meaningful engagement practices within the work and to move us along our journey to become an engagement capable environment.

IMPACT AND RESULTS OF CHANGE

The role of Patient Partner at CFHI acted as a catalyst for **learning-by-doing** in engagement efforts within CFHI, by providing numerous learning opportunities, mentoring and coaching for staff as well as to collaborative teams in programs across CFHI. The Patient Partner took on many roles, including:



Over the past 2 years, we have seen a shift in CFHI's engagement work – moving from consultative models to more collaborative/partnership models along the International Association for Public Participation continuum of engagement – and increasingly, and with clarity of purpose, across all of our activities and programs. Patient partners work together with CFHI staff to: co-develop quality improvement collaboratives and methods during design days; actively participate in decision making in merit review processes to select healthcare teams for our collaborative programs; lead the development of and deliver curriculum related to engagement and partnership practices; and the inclusion of patient/family/caregiver advisors and partners required on improvement teams across CFHI collaborative.

LESSONS LEARNED/SUSTAINABILITY

The development and embedding of the unique staff role of 'Patient Partner' demonstrates CFHI's commitment to advancing patient engagement and partnership throughout the health system. The experience and expertise of the Patient Partner has allowed them to take on many roles - as educator, coach & mentor, change agent, and leader - and they have advanced us on our journey to become an engagement capable environment. The role of Patient Partner has provided the infrastructure necessary to support internal capacity development of staff and meaningful and purposeful engagement practices that are consistent across CFHI.

Importantly, the Guiding Principles for Patient and Family Engagement will continue to guide our work, and the work of the teams we support. These principles will help to shape how we work across CFHI. We will hold ourselves accountable to this work through ongoing reflection, conversation and evaluation. Numerous policies and processes have been embedded with patient partnership in mind, ensuring organizational structures support partnership throughout our work.

THE FUTURE JOURNEY

The role of Patient Partner will continue to evolve as we foster the ongoing development of the key pillars of engagement capable environments – to enhance capacity of patient partners, staff/teams, and leaders in the healthcare system for meaningful and purposeful engagement and partnership of patients, families, and caregivers. We will seek guidance from and working together with patient partners across Canada to better understand their needs for capability development, so they may fully **take their space** at all levels of the healthcare system, and contribute in ways that allow for full and meaningful partnerships in care and system redesign. We will continue to advance our work with system leaders, providers and healthcare teams in the **how-to's** of purposeful engagement to ensure patients, families, and caregivers are embedded as partners in care.

The innovative and unique role of Patient Partner as a staff member may be applied by other organizations to grow their engagement efforts in order to create engagement capable environments, and to walk the talk of engagement.

Guiding Principles for Patient and Family Engagement

