**CENTRETOWN COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE**

**ADVOCACY & COMMUNICATIONS ACTION TEAM (ACAT)**

**TERMS OF REFERENCE**

**MANDATE**

The Advocacy and Communications Action Team’s (ACAT) primary objective is to support the Board and staff of Centretown Community Health Centre on advocacy, lobbying, and communication issues. This includes Centretown CHC’s public profile, strategic partnerships and influencing the position of both the Centre and community health centres (CHC) in general in the health care and social service delivery system. ACAT’s “targets” include clients, community members, partner organizations and institutions, businesses, politicians, media and the general public within our catchment area and the region (City of Ottawa and Champlain). Communications and advocacy efforts address community issues, needs and systems, especially in the area of health and well-being. At times, ACAT may also target a wider geographic area (province-wide), for example, the provincial Minister of Health or in response to policy positions of the Association of Ontario Health Centres or at the federal level through the Canadian Association of Community Health Centres.

# ADVOCACY FRAMEWORK

ACAT is guided by CCHC’s vision statement and strategic priorities, as well as principles and approaches outlined in the CCHC Strategic Plan, Communications Plan and related communications policies.

**RESPONSIBILITIES**

In the context of CCHC’s strategic priorities, ACAT:

* Monitors local, regional, provincial and federal developments to identify issues that may require action within its mandate.
* Develops policy positions and/or written material, contributes to planning for CCHC advocacy and communication efforts.
* Represents the Centre at local or regional events or on committees.
* Carries out annual strategic planning, workplanning and evaluation activities and contributes to CCHC’s strategic planning cycle.
* Each year, ACAT develops a workplan for approval by the Board.

**ACCOUNTABILITY**

ACAT is accountable to the Board and responsive to community needs. Its activities are documented through formal minutes and verbal reports (supplemented by written briefs) to the Board on a regular basis.

At the end of each year, the outgoing ACAT reviews the progress it has achieved against its strategic goals and objectives and annual workplan. It also examines its current objectives and annual workplan and assesses what should be continued or discontinued. It reports to the Board its conclusions from this reflective exercise.

In addition, armed with information from various sources (see Strategic Framework for more information), including goals that have emerged from the most recent strategic planning exercise (as applicable, depending on the year), it identifies new issues, objectives and activities for the coming year, and prepares a report, with recommendations, to the new Board.

Members are expected to attend monthly meetings and let the Centre know if they will not be present.

**MEMBERSHIP**

ACAT must be chaired by a Board member and must include francophone representation. The committee shall consist of:

* At least two members of the Board of Directors, one of whom is the Chair
* Executive Director (ex officio)
* Staff members (identified through the Executive Director)
* Community members with appropriate experience, knowledge or linkages, including linkages to the three neighbourhoods served by the Centre

ACAT membership is normally solicited from new Board members at the time of the September or October Board meeting. Volunteer members from the community (who are not current Board members) can be identified based on their demonstrated interest in the Centre as a whole (e.g., from among those who ran for the Board but were not elected) and/or solicited through the Centre Volunteer Coordinator.

**MEETINGS**

ACAT shall meet once per month, normally prior to the Executive Committee and Board meeting, or as required.

* The Chair of ACAT shall be selected by members of the Board no later than the September meeting.
* ACAT may be co-chaired as long as one of the Co-Chairs is a board member.
* Minutes of each meeting shall be taken by a recording secretary nominated for the year or by members in turn.
* Communication between ACAT and staff will be in accordance with appropriate lines of communication (e.g., through the Executive Director and/or Management assigned to ACAT).
* Following each monthly ACAT meeting, Board agenda items related to ACAT and its work are proposed by the Executive Director to the Executive Committee and approved by that Committee.

**Approved by committee: September 20, 2016**

Approved by the Board: September 27, 2016