

ANNUAL REPORT

2020



Renfrew County and
District Health Unit

"Optimal Health for All in Renfrew County and District"

BOARD OF HEALTH ADDRESS

2020 is a year that we will never forget as lives across the globe were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. This pandemic brought new challenges and difficulties to Renfrew County and District Health Unit (RCDHU). It also brought triumphs, collaborations, and successes demonstrating RCDHU's flexibility and adaptability in the face of a crisis.

To the staff of RCDHU, your dedication, support, and strength in the face of adversity was second to none. We extend to each one of you a heartfelt thank you.

The entire healthcare sector came together in an unprecedented manner and the collaborative focused tirelessly on the goal of containing the pandemic. What none of us could do alone, we managed to do together, to make RCD one of the safest regions in Ontario. Our heartfelt thanks go out to all our partners and to the public who were behind our efforts from the outset.

We are grateful to our provincial funding partners at the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. We also express our appreciation to the County of Renfrew, City of Pembroke and Township of South Algonquin for your funding contributions that sustained us during this tumultuous year.

RCDHU staff responded to the COVID-19 pandemic, actively managing COVID-19 cases and their contacts, 7 days per week, while sharing reliable, up to the minute information and statistics to help keep the public informed.

Teams continued to assess priorities in real-time ensuring simultaneous delivery of full COVID-19 response along with other mandatory public health programs and services. While not exhaustive, this includes immunization, the Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program, food investigations, and harm reduction services. RCDHU launched a new online prenatal program and the Healthy Babies Healthy Children program continued to support families throughout 2020.

In the fall, RCDHU also undertook a major office move. The main office established temporary operations at the Pembroke Mall, while awaiting completion of the new permanent office space at 141 Lake Street in downtown Pembroke. While this was no easy feat, staff persevered to make the transition as seamless as possible with minimal impact to the clients and community.

Finally, to all the clients and residents of Renfrew County and District, thank you for supporting RCDHU by adhering to all the Covid 19 Public Health measures to keep yourself, your family, and your community safe during this difficult and unprecedented year.



Dr. Robert Cushman
Medical Officer of Health (A)



Heather G Daly
CEO(A)/Director of Corporate
Services



Margaret Ann Aikens
Chair, Board of Health

COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Since March 2020, Renfrew County and District Health Unit (RCDHU) has been focused on responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. This has meant reallocation of staff, restructuring of the workplace, and new collaborations, both internally and externally. For example, RCDHU established a COVID-19 Call Centre to respond to 25,855 phone inquiries and worked with partners to plan for the implementation of the COVID-19 vaccine rollout.

Between March and December 2020, RCDHU conducted extensive case and contact management, contacting 236 individuals who tested positive for COVID-19, while identifying and following 1,232 high risk contacts.

The pandemic presented challenges for all. RCDHU's leadership and contributions to the response were made possible through collaborations with many local partners. Through the resiliency of our communities, relationships, and support for one another, Renfrew County and District (RCD) will recover stronger from this pandemic, with an encouraging future for this beautiful region.



236

cases of COVID-19
reported

1,232

high-risk contacts
identified and
followed up
with

25,855

COVID-19 related
telephone inquiries
responded
to

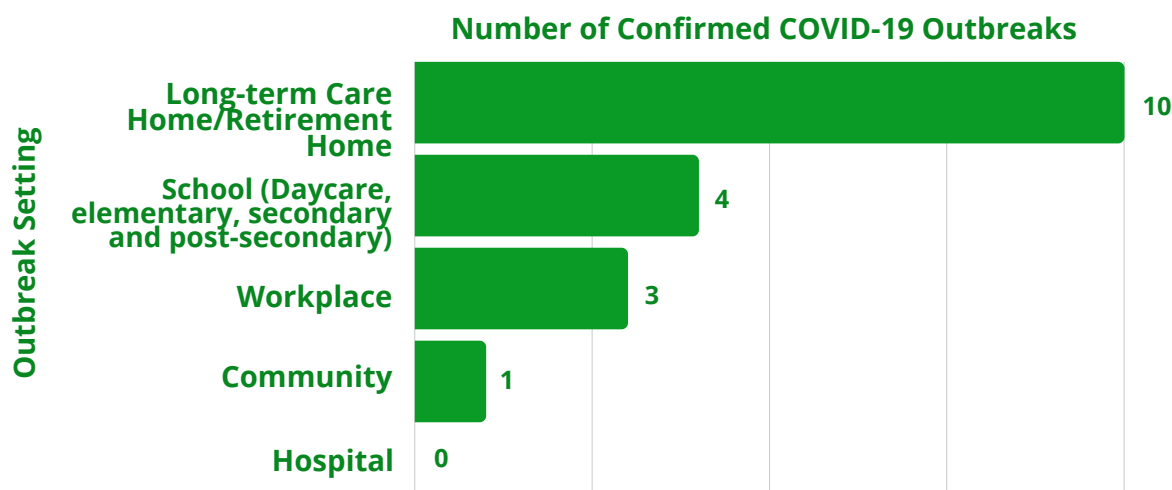


COVID-19 EMERGENCY RESPONSE



OUTBREAK MANAGEMENT

RCDHU worked with local long-term care homes, retirement homes, schools, daycares, workplaces, businesses and hospitals to minimize transmission of COVID-19 in these settings. In 2020, a total of 18 COVID-19 outbreaks were declared in accordance with Provincial definitions.



COVID-19 COMMUNICATIONS

During the pandemic, RCDHU communicated up-to-date COVID-19 public health measures and advice to local residents and businesses. RCDHU's Communications Team released news releases, public service announcements, and resources such as fact sheets, frequently asked questions (FAQs), guidance documents and decision-making tools, responded to media requests, and shared social media posts related to COVID-19.

1,306

Facebook Posts

1,141

Twitter Posts

80

COVID-19 Related
Media Releases

76

Fact Sheets,
FAQs, & Guidance
Documents

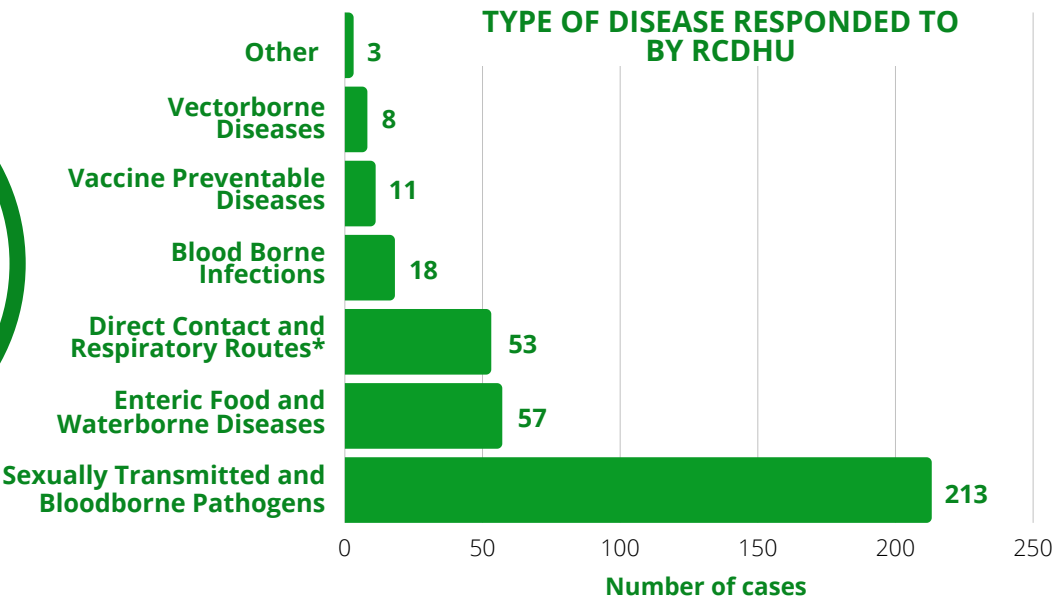
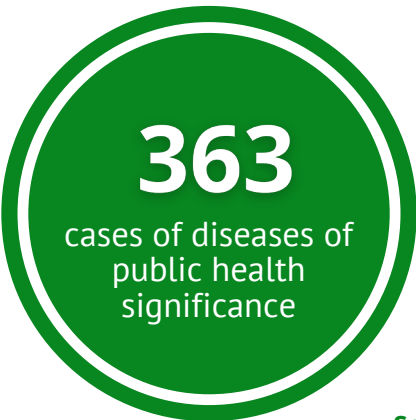
24

YouTube Videos

DISEASES OF PUBLIC HEALTH SIGNIFICANCE

Disease caused by a novel coronavirus (e.g. COVID-19) is one example of the **nearly 70 communicable diseases** that are reportable to the local Medical Officer of Health. A full list of reportable diseases can be found [here](#).

In addition to COVID-19 cases, RCDHU staff promptly responded to **363 cases** of other diseases of public health significance.



**Does not include COVID-19 cases.*



HEALTHY COMMUNITIES



POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION

In 2020, RCDHU released the *Status of Mental Health in Renfrew County and District* report. The purpose of this report was to assess the mental health of RCD residents, identify trends in mental health status, and examine the local influence that social determinants may have on mental health and well-being.

This report highlighted that*:

- Many RCD residents self-report that they have excellent or very good mental health, as well as a strong sense of belonging to their local community
- The use of emergency department, hospital and physician-based mental health care and addictions services have been increasing in RCD.
- Health inequities in mental health and well-being related to income, education, employment and residence (population centre vs. rural area) exist in RCD.
- Mental health concerns during pregnancy have been increasing

*This report included data from 2019 and earlier; therefore, findings in this report do not reflect the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic may have on the mental health of RCD residents.

RCDHU is committed to working in collaboration with the many community partners that are addressing mental health needs, in order to improve the mental health and well-being of RCD residents.

See the [*Status of Mental Health in Renfrew County and District Report*](#) to learn more.

ONTARIO SENIORS DENTAL CARE PROGRAM

The Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program is a government-funded dental care program. It provides access to free, routine dental care for eligible seniors 65 years or older. The program is designed to support low-income seniors. Seniors can apply for the program online, by mail or by contacting RCDHU for an application form and navigation support.

108

seniors accessed the program for dental treatment during the COVID-19 Pandemic

HEALTHY SMILES ONTARIO

Healthy Smiles Ontario is a free dental program for eligible children and youth 17 and under. It's very important to start seeing a dentist when your child is 12 months old and to keep going regularly. Healthy Smiles Ontario covers regular check-ups, preventive care and treatment.

84

children and youth accessed the program for Emergency and Essential Services distributed

HARM REDUCTION

Harm reduction refers to any program, policy or intervention that seeks to reduce the adverse health and social consequences associated with substance use. A harm reduction approach provides individuals who use substances a choice of how they will minimize harms through non-judgmental and non-coercive strategies.

Providing access to sterile and new equipment and proper disposal methods help reduce the risk of blood-borne infections among substance users, their peers, and ultimately the public.

155,500
needles
distributed

8,015
straight
stem pipes
distributed

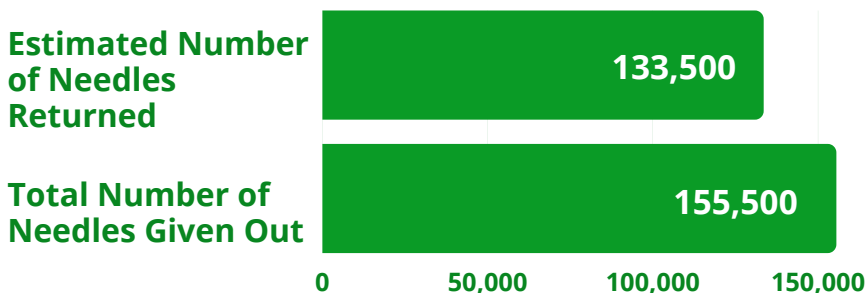
2,901
bowl pipes
distributed



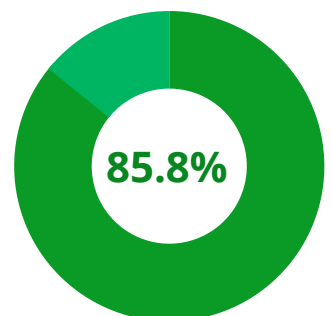
NALOXONE

Naloxone is a life-saving medication that can temporarily reverse an opioid overdose. Naloxone can either be injected or given as a nasal spray. Free nasal spray naloxone is available at Renfrew County and District Health Unit and community partners through the Ontario Naloxone Program.

NEEDLE EXCHANGE STATISTICS 2020



Estimated
Needle
Return
Rate*:



**Recovery rates do not represent all disposal options our community, and therefore are crude estimations of recovery numbers*

VACCINE PREVENTABLE DISEASES

RCDHU's Clinical Services team was able to maintain immunization services by prioritizing primary series immunizations for infants and youth through appointment-based clinics at both the Pembroke and Renfrew offices.



132

immunization Clinics hosted
between the Pembroke and
Renfrew Offices

1,218

vaccinations administered
to children under the age
of 2



Although in-school second vaccinations for Grade 7 students were cancelled, RCDHU was able to offer additional immunization clinics in the fall to provide access to these vaccines for students.

853

vaccinations
administered to
youth
between the ages of
7 and 17

The clinical services team was able to maintain vaccine distribution to health care providers, conduct 100% of the annual cold-chain inspections with any provider/organization storing publicly-funded vaccine, and follow up on 100% of vaccine cold chain incidents that were reported.

HEALTHY FAMILIES

During the COVID-19 response, Renfrew County and District Health Unit (RCDHU) prioritized the continuation of the *Healthy Babies Healthy Children* program and supporting families with infant feeding and healthy growth and development.

To reach expectant parents, RCDHU launched a new online prenatal program called *Growing a Healthy Baby*. Families in need of support with infant feeding, mental health, and parenting were visited by nurses who exercised the necessary precautions to protect themselves and families from COVID-19.

The Parent Child Drop-In clinics were shifted to become a *Well Baby Drop In* by appointment service. Families unable to attend the drop in were visited in the home. Families helped by public health nurses at RCDHU shared that they found home visits to be helpful, as other health and social services were not readily available due to the pandemic. RCDHU is very proud to have offered high quality support in the community through home visiting.



COMMUNITY GARDENS

Support for food access was redirected to the development of RCDHU's Community Gardens Toolkit to support gardening during the Pandemic. The government of Ontario lifted restrictions, allowing community gardens to operate following the guidance of the local Medical Officer of Health.

HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS



PRIVATE DRINKING WATER TESTING

RCDHU provides water testing services for residents who have private drinking water systems such as a well. This free service is offered to residents of RCD. The water sample is checked for E. coli and Total Coliform bacteria. Sample bottles can be picked up at both Health Unit offices and all municipal offices in RCD.

Filled water testing bottles can be dropped off at both health unit offices, McNab Braeside Township office, Laurentian Hills Township office, and Lorraine's Pharmasave in Barry's Bay.

4775

private water
samples
analyzed

29

ticks positive
for Lyme
Disease

LYME DISEASE

RCDHU monitors Lyme Disease in the community through passive and active surveillance. In 2020, a total of **133** ticks were submitted for analysis, with 120 of those ticks being *Ixodes scapularis* (black-legged ticks that can transmit Lyme Disease). Of those 120 ticks, 24.1% carried Lyme Disease.

RABIES INVESTIGATIONS

RCDHU investigates all reported animal bites in an effort to prevent rabies in humans. RCDHU inspectors verify vaccination status of pets that are involved in biting or scratching incidents, and also provide public rabies education.

204

rabies
investigations

216

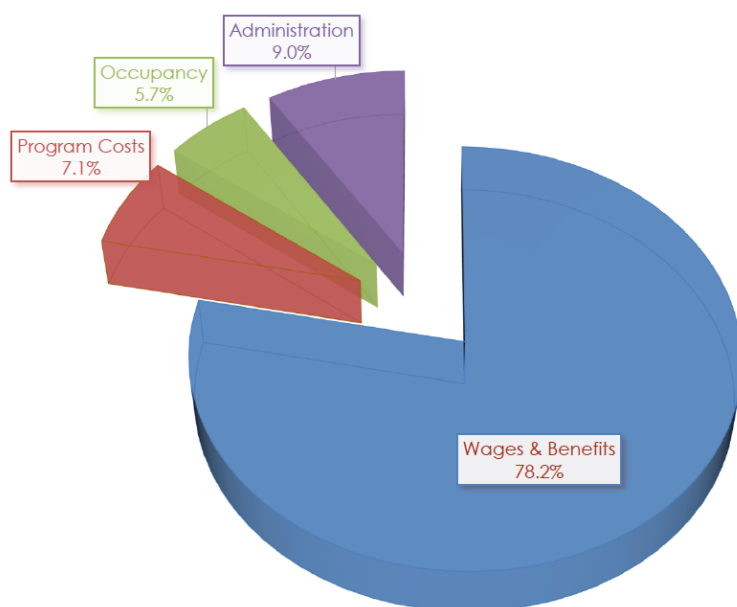
high-risk food
safety
inspections
completed

FOOD INVESTIGATIONS

During the pandemic all high-risk establishments have been prioritized to have at least one food inspection in 2020/2021. Inspections of other food establishments were conducted in response to complaints.

FINANCIAL REPORT 2020

EXPENDITURES BY CATEGORY



FUNDING SOURCES

