

# ANNUAL REPORT

# 2021

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RENFREW COUNTY AND  
DISTRICT HEALTH UNIT

*"Optimal Health for All in Renfrew County and District"*



# BOARD OF HEALTH

## ADDRESS

This Annual Report captures the highlights from 2021 and offers a chance to reflect upon the steadfastness and resilience of the dedicated team working at Renfrew County and District Health Unit (RCDHU).

The COVID-19 virus persisted with its unrelenting grip, becoming an unwelcome but permanent part of our everyday lives. The RCDHU team responded to the challenge, once again fully resolved to ensure the safety and well-being of residents in Renfrew County and District (RCD).

There was a focus shift in 2021 as we began to coordinate and deliver COVID-19 vaccinations. The organization continued to operate beyond capacity, managing outbreaks and being a vital source of information for the community.

At the same time, RCDHU relocated the main office, moving from our temporary mall location into our final new home at 141 Lake Street in Pembroke. A major transition was required by staff, while multi-faceted challenges pressed in from many directions. Service was uninterrupted through it all.

For another challenging year we say thank you to our staff, for your commitment and service. We are proud you are with us and words aren't enough to express our appreciation. We'd also like to thank the Ministry of Health, our municipalities, community partners and members of the public for your support throughout 2021.



**HEATHER G DALY**

CHIEF EXECUTIVE  
OFFICER



**DR. ROBERT CUSHMAN**

ACTING MEDICAL OFFICER  
OF HEALTH



**ANN AIKENS**

CHAIR, BOARD OF HEALTH



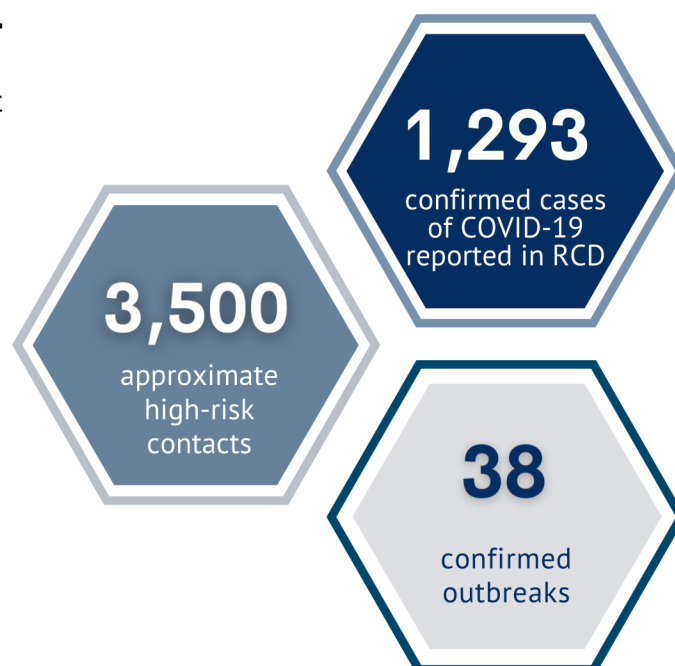
# ONGOING COVID-19 RESPONSE

2021 began amidst a resurgence of COVID-19, as the province declared a second state of emergency and further enhanced public health safety measures. Still in the height of the pandemic, RCDHU continued to work determinedly at the forefront of Renfrew County and District's emergency response. This meant redeployment of staff, restructuring of the workplace, and new local collaborations. While 2021 brought new challenges and difficulties to RCDHU, it also highlighted our successes, partnerships, and leadership in the face of crisis.

## CASE AND CONTACT MANAGEMENT

Throughout 2021, RCDHU staff continued to conduct extensive case and contact management to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission, confirming **1,293** individuals who tested positive for COVID-19, while identifying and following up with more than **3,500** high-risk contacts.

A dedicated team continued to support individuals who had tested positive or been exposed to COVID-19, providing self-isolation guidance, health teaching, testing recommendations and support.



## OUTBREAK MANAGEMENT

RCDHU staff continued to work closely with local long-term care homes, retirement homes, congregate living facilities, schools, daycares, workplaces, businesses and hospitals to minimize transmission of COVID-19 in these settings. Staff worked to provide facilities with guidance and support in navigating infection prevention and control measures, and rapidly changing public health recommendations. In 2021, a total of **38 COVID-19 outbreaks** were declared in these settings.



# COVID-19 VACCINE HISTORIC CAMPAIGN

By the end of 2021, **183,494 doses** of a COVID-19 vaccine were administered in RCD, making this the largest vaccination campaign in the county's history. By year-end, approximately **90%** of RCD adults had received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, with **87%** having also received a second or third dose. RCDHU worked closely with many local partners to coordinate, plan, and host vaccination clinics throughout the county.

RCDHU developed a local vaccine rollout plan, the *COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution and Administration Plan* (VDAP), which ensured vaccine access for residents across the county.



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received more  
than one dose



Working in collaboration with local paramedics, RCDHU provided mobile vaccination services: drive-through clinics, small pop-up clinics in remote areas, on-site vaccination in congregate settings, and in-home vaccinations. The goal was to remove the barriers to vaccine access wherever possible. Staff also worked alongside Algonquins of Pikwakanagan to vaccinate local residents.





## COVID-19 OUTREACH

RCDHU introduced a COVID-19 Vaccine Call Center with the support of municipalities. Together, RCDHU and partners were able to offer timely appointment bookings, navigation in eligibility and guidance.

RCDHU also acted as the sole authorized organization in RCD to manage vaccine inventory and distribution to community partners. RCDHU played an integral role providing COVaxON access and training to all community partners administering the vaccine. This is the key electronic documentation system used to record all COVID-19 vaccinations across Ontario.

The success of the 2021 COVID-19 vaccine rollout could not have been accomplished without the strong partnership and collaboration of numerous community partners. RCDHU worked with the five local hospitals, primary care, paramedics, pharmacy staff, volunteers, and summer students to deliver mass vaccination clinics all across RCD. As a result of these tremendous local efforts, RCDHU supported the successful delivery of 864 clinics.



Throughout 2021, Healthy Environments staff continued to support various business sectors in navigating provincial COVID-19 safety regulations, including workplaces, places of worship, sports and recreation organizations, post-secondary institutions, day camps and others.

As provincial regulations continued to evolve, RCDHU provided direction regarding sector-specific safety requirements, including measures like capacity limits, screening requirements, masking, cleaning and disinfection, and safety plans.

RCDHU continued efforts to reduce the spread of COVID-19, protecting workers and the public through enforcement of the *Re-Opening Ontario Act*. Following a progressive enforcement approach, staff educated businesses and residents on regulatory requirements, and provided support in making the necessary corrections to follow public health law.

# SCHOOL FOCUSED NURSE INITIATIVE

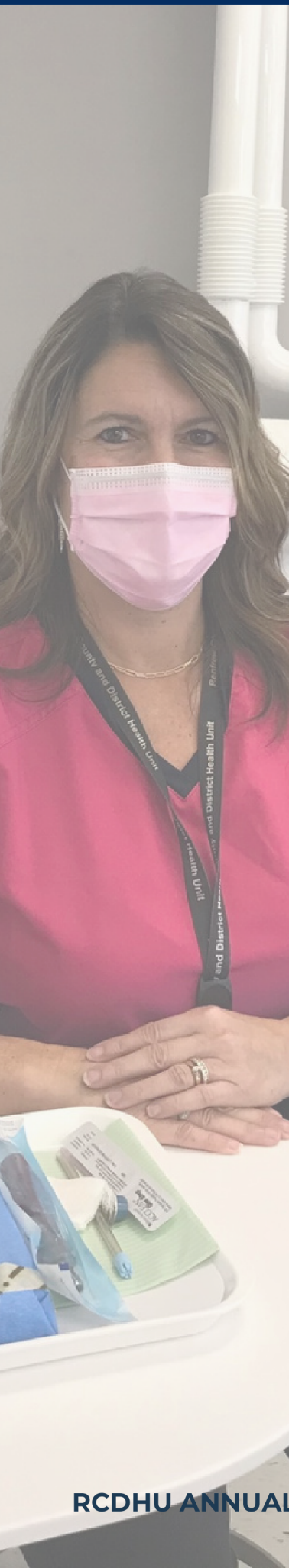
2021 saw the continuation of RCDHU's **School-Focused Nurses (SFN)** initiative. This initiative offered an increased level of support for schools and school boards, with a dedicated focus on protecting students and school communities.

Nurses provided rapid-response support to schools as they implemented public health measures, including symptom screening, infection prevention and control measures, case and contact management and vaccination.

With a determined effort to preserve in-person learning and reduce the transmission of COVID-19, RCDHU continuously collaborated with all five school boards, school administrators, educators, transportation providers, private schools, parents/guardians, and students, to implement protective measures in schools.

SFNs played a key role in vaccine delivery to students, providing **11** in-school and youth-dedicated COVID-19 vaccine clinics. By year end, **81.3%** of youth aged 12-17 had received a first dose, with **77.4%** having received a second dose. This was a considerable step forward in protecting the safety of schools and education of students.





# HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

To manage the varied demands of the pandemic, staff were redeployed to emergency response and vaccination efforts. Many public health programs and services were reduced and paused as a result. However, RCDHU still delivered modified priority programs and services to meet the needs of residents.

## DENTAL SERVICES

RCDHU welcomed clients into a state-of-the-art dental clinic in the new Pembroke office.

Staff supported low-income seniors in accessing treatment through the Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program (OSDCP). This service was also offered at Barry's Bay dental clinic within St. Francis Memorial Hospital, and additional mobile clinics in Renfrew and Cobden.

In 2021, staff saw a significant increase in clients, with **287 seniors** enrolled in the program, compared to 108 clients enrolled the previous year. RCDHU facilitated **587 client visits** to a dentist, and 45 clients received new dentures.

RCDHU also continued to offer emergency and preventive dental services to children and youth through the Healthy Smiles Ontario program (HSO). **97** children and youth accessed oral health services.

**287**

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visits to a dentist  
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## HARM REDUCTION PROGRAM

In March of 2021, RCDHU along with the County of Renfrew Paramedic Service issued a public alert in response to an increase in overdoses across RCD. Through various channels and partnerships, RCDHU increased harm reduction messaging and promoted access to naloxone, a medication that can temporarily reverse the effects of an opioid overdose and allow time for medical help to arrive.

Staff continue to provide access to sterile and new equipment, and proper disposal methods to help reduce the risk of bloodborne infections among individuals who use substances, their peers, and the public.

In 2021, harm reduction clients accessed services **757** times at the RCDHU main office. Staff distributed **994 Naloxone kits** to clients and community partners through the Ontario Naloxone Program. Throughout the pandemic, RCDHU maintained services and prioritized partnerships to strive to reduce the adverse health and social consequences associated with substance use.

## HEALTHY FAMILIES



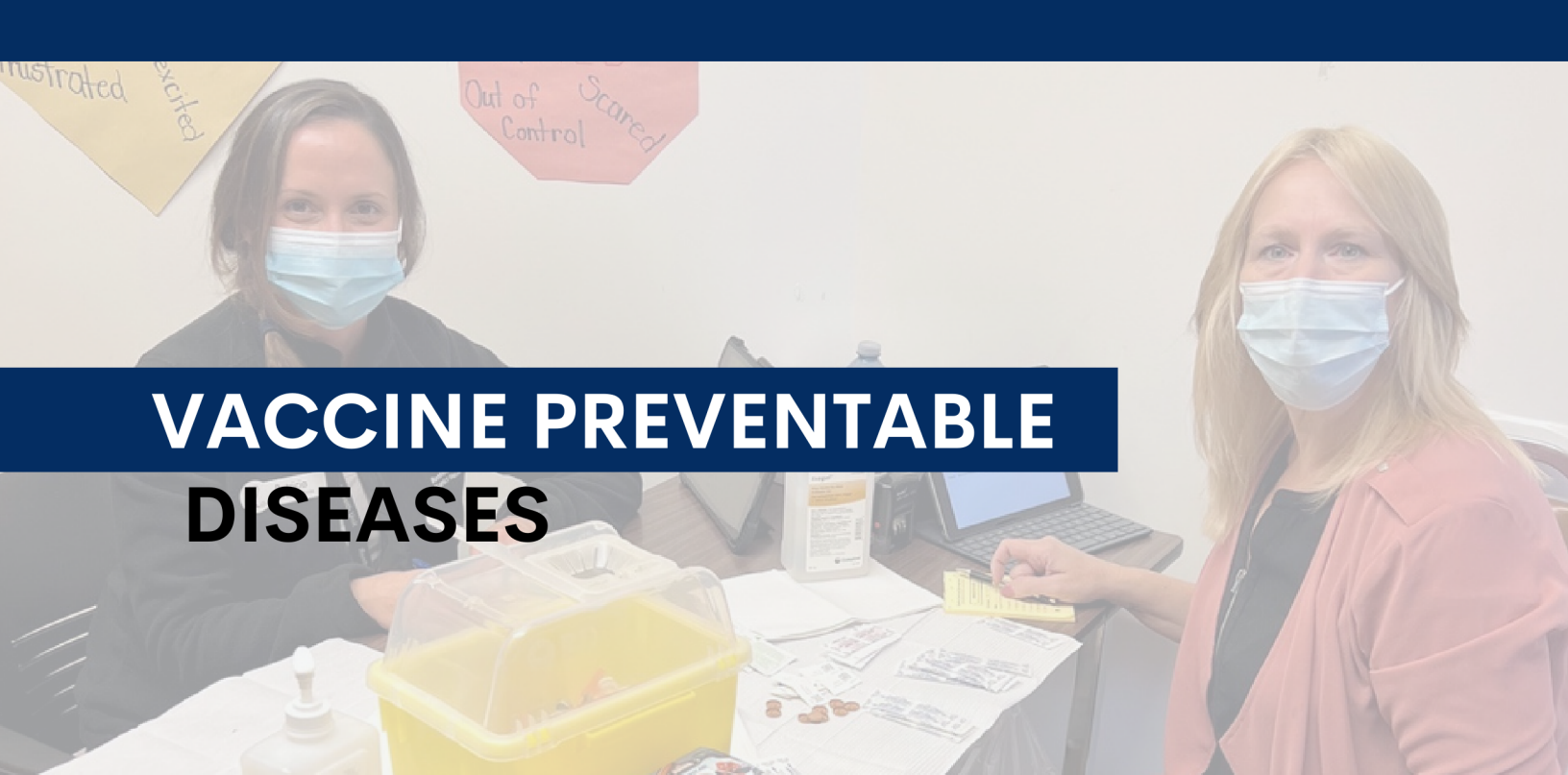
Throughout 2021, RCDHU prioritized the continuation of the Healthy Babies Healthy Children (HBHC) program, supporting families with infant feeding and healthy growth and development through telephone contact, e-visit technology, and home visits.

The HBHC team recruited two social workers to enhance services provided through RCDHU's *family friendly service plan*, namely mental health support and navigation of community programs and services. The collaborative efforts of a blended home visiting team comprised of public health nurses, a lay home visitor and social workers, provided families with opportunities to achieve their potential through a multi-faceted and tailored service.

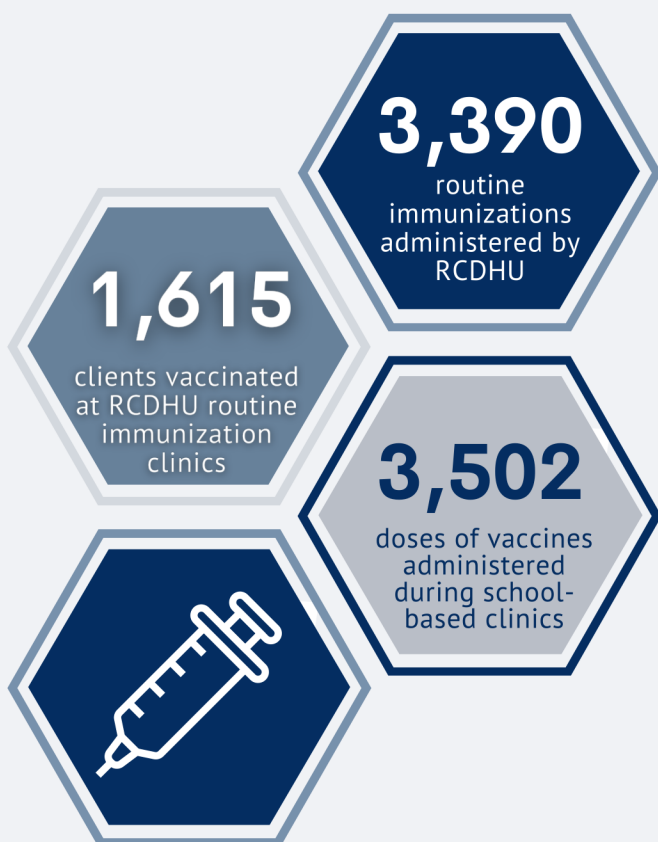
In a determined attempt to meet the needs of new families, RCDHU resumed its partnership with Pembroke Regional Hospital. The HBHC Screening Liaison Public Health Nurses assured a seamless service delivery and continuation of care from hospital to discharge.

Healthy Families staff have also continued to offer infant feeding and growth and development support to families through *Well Baby* clinics. Families unable to attend clinics were visited in the home.





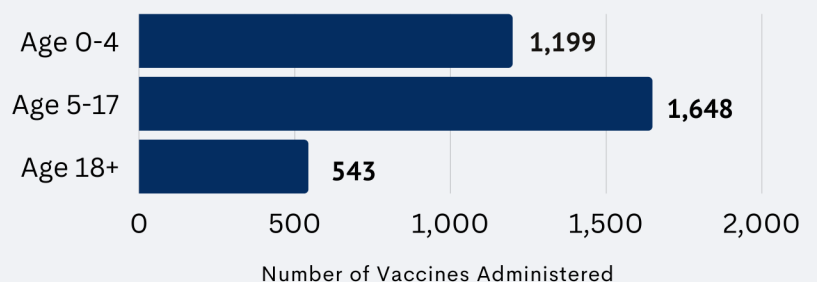
# VACCINE PREVENTABLE DISEASES



There were significant interruptions to the grade seven school-based immunization program due to school closures and the redirection of resources to COVID-19 response. In 2021, RCDHU's Clinical Services team worked to resume school-based immunization clinics for both grade seven students and grade eight students, offering **49 school clinics**.

Despite staff redeployment to COVID-19 vaccination efforts, RCDHU was able to maintain routine immunization services across the life span, offering **146 appointment-based clinics** at both the Pembroke and Renfrew offices.

**3,390 Vaccines Administered at RCDHU by Age Group, 2021**



# HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS

Healthy Environments staff continued to provide essential programming throughout the year, as Public Health Inspectors (PHIs) investigated health hazards in the community.

## FOOD INVESTIGATIONS

During the pandemic, RCHDU prioritized food inspections of all high-risk establishments, with at least one inspection per establishment. Other food establishment inspections were conducted in response to complaints and other reasons based on demand, resulting in a total of **772 food safety inspections**.

## RABIES INVESTIGATIONS

All reported animal bites were investigated in an effort to prevent the transmission of rabies to humans. PHIs worked to verify vaccination status of pets that were involved in biting or scratching incidents, and also provided public rabies education. In 2021, staff conducted **209 rabies investigations**.

## LYME DISEASE

RCDHU also monitored Lyme Disease in the community through passive and active surveillance. In 2021, a total of **111 ticks** were submitted for analysis, with 96 of those ticks being *Ixodes scapularis* (black-legged ticks that can transmit Lyme Disease). Of those 96 ticks, **11.45%** carried Lyme Disease.



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ticks positive for  
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# COMMUNICATIONS

Throughout 2021, communications staff worked to keep residents and community partners informed and up to date with accurate COVID-19 and COVID-19 vaccine guidance and statistics in an ever-evolving information landscape.

RCDHU continued to provide frequent media releases and daily website updates on local case numbers, testing, and facility outbreaks, while also developing a high volume of resources to provide public health guidance to residents, partners, and businesses. Staff worked to promote and build trust in COVID-19 vaccination, while providing information on the expanding vaccine rollout.

# OFFICE RELOCATION

RCDHU's Pembroke Office relocated to the new permanent office space at 141 Lake Street in downtown Pembroke. During the final phases of construction, RCDHU was temporarily located at the Pembroke Mall.

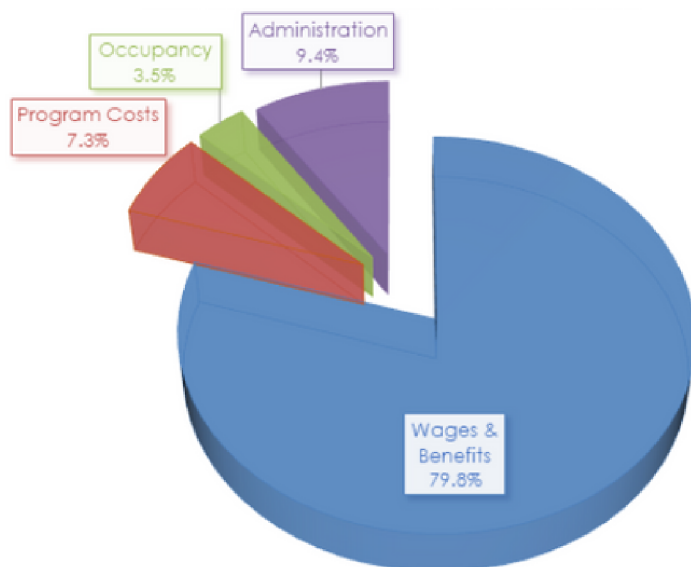
During the construction and moving process, staff prioritized continuity of client service and operations to ensure there were no disruptions to programs or services.

The downtown location reduced transportation barriers for some clients, resulting in an immediate positive impact on the number of clients accessing services. Additionally, the proximity to other health and social service partners created efficiencies for both clients and staff.



# FINANCIAL REPORT 2021

## EXPENDITURES BY CATEGORY



## FUNDING SOURCES

