



Medical Officer of Health Report to the Board

Tuesday, June 24th, 2025

Health Protection

Infectious Disease Program

Measles:

RCDHU continues to monitor measles activity in Ontario. As of June 12, 2025, Ontario has reported 2083 measles cases from October 18, 2024, to June 10, 2025, related to this outbreak. This marks an increase of 74 cases from the previous Public Health Ontario report.

The majority (75%) of cases were among infants, children, and adolescents, 97% of whom were unvaccinated. Tragically, on June 5, 2025, Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Kieran Moore, confirmed the death of an infant who was infected with measles at birth.

RCDHU remains committed to monitoring the situation and implementing measures to mitigate further spread. To date, no further local cases have been identified since the 2 confirmed cases earlier this year.

Respiratory Indicators:

As of June 10, 2025, respiratory indicators have been trending down with some variability in outbreaks and emergency department visits due to respiratory illness. Renfrew County and District (RCD) is experiencing approximately 1 outbreak per week. Local COVID-19, influenza and RSV test percent positivity is low. Hospital bed occupancy due to respiratory illness is moderate to low. Approximately 10% of current emergency department visits are related to respiratory illness.

Immunization Program

Measles response:

As part of our ongoing efforts to increase the measles immunization rate locally, with a focus on supporting under-vaccinated communities, 3 MMR clinics are scheduled this month in the community that has been most affected by local measles infections.

COVID-19 Vaccine:

As of June 9, 2025, 11 out of 11 mobile clinics have been completed at retirement homes in RCD in support of the Spring COVID-19 vaccination campaign.

Immunization Surveillance for Licensed Child Care:

Immunization program staff are partnering with licensed child care operators in RCD to commence immunization surveillance in alignment with the *Child Care and Early Years Act*. There are 28 licensed childcare facilities in RCD, with approximately 1040 enrolled children. To support surveillance efforts, staff are actively reviewing immunization records for all enrolled children. By the end of June, immunization notices will be distributed to parents and legal guardians whose children either have missing immunization information or are not up to date with the required vaccines for child care attendance. Families needing immunization services may schedule an appointment at an RCDHU community clinic or consult their health care provider. It is the responsibility of parents and legal guardians to report all updated immunization records to both the licensed child care provider and RCDHU.

Grade 7 Program:

All second-round grade 7 school-based immunization clinics for the 2024-2025 school year were hosted from the beginning of April to the first week of June. In total, RCDHU hosted 38 school clinics and provided 1259 doses of either Hepatitis B, Meningococcal, or Human Papilloma Virus vaccines to eligible students. RCDHU staff are currently in the process of doing outreach to students who may have missed the opportunity to be vaccinated at a school-based clinic. These students are offered a catch-up appointment at an RCDHU community clinic or referred to their health care provider to be vaccinated.

Cold chain inspections:

RCDHU's vaccine inventory team is planning annual cold chain inspections for all facilities that order and store publicly funded vaccines in RCD. It is anticipated that approximately 120 vaccine storage units will be inspected in 2025. These cold chain inspections are planned to occur from June to August.

Emergency Response Program

The 2025 freshet concluded on May 28, 2025. Staff attended 12 meetings throughout the spring melt season. Residents sandbagged as a preventative measure and some properties along the main stem of the Ottawa River experienced flooding.

RCDHU emergency management subcommittee staff members are completing an updated hazard identification and risk assessment (HIRA). This is a structured process for identifying the nature and extent of risk of local hazards that may affect the health of the community. Local hazards are reviewed on an annual basis and results are shared publicly.

Healthy Environments Program

Under the vector-borne disease umbrella, tick dragging was completed at 5 pre-determined locations. Ticks were found at three out of five locations, which will be monitored again in the Fall.

West Nile virus surveillance begins with mosquito trapping on June 23. Fifty traps at 14 different locations across RCD will be set over a 10-week period. Results are obtained within 48 hours so that a quick response with public messaging can be issued if necessary.

June marks the start of public beach testing across RCD. Thirty beaches are tested until the last week of August. Testing results are posted on the RCDHU website.

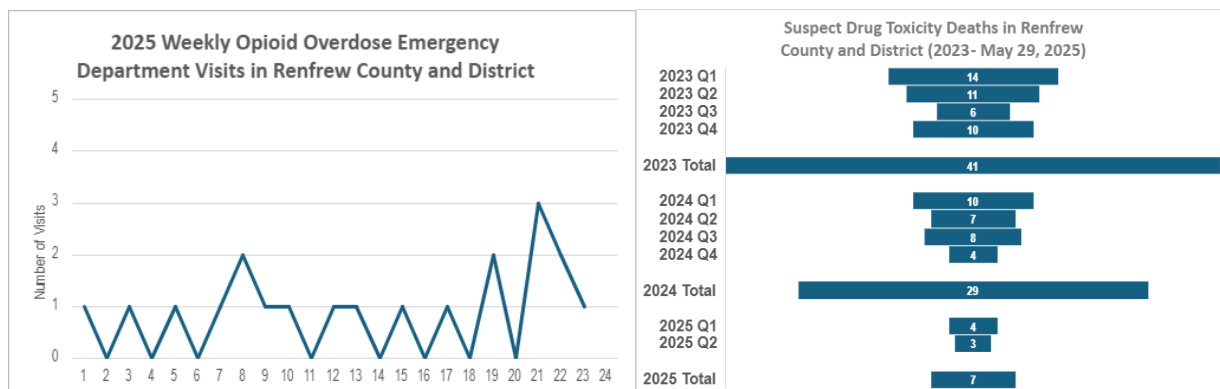
HEALTH PROMOTION

Renfrew County and District Drug Strategy

The implementation of the priorities of the RCDDS are in progress and are the responsibility of each of the four pillar working groups. A mid-year report will be provided to the Steering Committee at the July meeting.

RCCDS Substance Use Harm Indicators:

As of June 8th, there have been 20 emergency department visits related to opioid overdoses, which is an increase of 9 since the previous update. There has been one additional suspect drug toxicity death since the previous update and a total of 7 in 2025 as of June 8th. Recently there was a retroactive update made to the data from the Office of the Chief Coroner of Ontario that increased the number of deaths from 8 to 10 for the first quarter of 2024.



Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation Collaboration

The Outreach Team co-hosted a Film Screening with the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation's Chronic Diseases nurse. The educational film was "Strong Medicine" and was developed by and for Indigenous people living with HIV, in association with CATIE and CAAN (<https://www.catie.ca/strongmedicine>). RCDHU nurses then provided a presentation on HIV basics, as well as a lunch, educational resources, information on health unit services, and testing through the

SPRITE project offered on-site. The event fostered excellent discussion and engagement amongst the group with many attendees taking part in the testing. The Outreach Team hopes to continue working with the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation's Health Services team to strengthen our partnerships, increase awareness, and improve the accessibility of health unit services.

You're the Chef During the 2024-2025 School Year

The 2024/25 school year is coming to a close, and with it, the You're the Chef (YTC) programming delivered across RCD schools has wrapped up for the season. This year four teachers, three of whom were newly trained, successfully delivered YTC across three schools, reaching a total of 97 students. To support implementation and reduce barriers to participation, RCDHU provided YTC kits with necessary cooking tools and supplies, promoting greater equity and inclusion across classrooms. For the first time, two participating classrooms administered pre- and post-program questionnaires, allowing our health unit to collect measurable data on improvements in food literacy skills specifically linked to the YTC program. These assessments, paired with positive teacher feedback, reinforced the program's role in building student confidence and competence in food skills.

Healthy Babies, Healthy Children (HBHC) Program

The HBHC Home Visiting program is an early intervention, voluntary program with the goal of optimizing growth and development and reducing health inequities for families. This Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) funded program is delivered by RCDHU staff and supports families in the prenatal period and families with children from birth until their transition to school.

The blended home visiting team includes public health nurses (PHNs), a home visitor, and social workers. Each member of the home visiting team carries a caseload of 15-20 families at a time, with the frequency of visits varying based on the family's goals. In the 2024/2025 year, 921 screenings for program eligibility were completed with families across RCD, in collaboration with hospitals and other community partners.

RCDHU continues its partnership with Pembroke Regional Hospital to ensure seamless service delivery and continuation of care for families in the postpartum period. HBHC PHNs meet with new families prior to discharge from hospital. In the 2024/2025 year, RCDHU staff visited with 313 families in hospital prior to their discharge.

Also, in the 2024/2025 year, HBHC staff completed the ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training) program, which is a two-day, interactive workshop that equips participants with the skills to provide suicide first-aid, helping them recognize signs of suicide, intervene effectively, and develop safety plans.

Client Experiences:

"I just had a consult with [the public health nurse] this week and she was AMAZING. Absolutely helpful." – *Client accessing Breastfeeding support in the postpartum period*

"[The social worker] helps me to complete my disability forms so that I can finally afford to pay the rent and buy stuff the baby needs." – *HBHC Client*

"Sometimes it feels like it's all about the baby. She's just for me!" – *HBHC Client*

Healthy Growth and Development Program Updates

Oral Health Month Campaign:

In April, the oral health and healthy families programs partnered to launch an oral health campaign promoting healthy oral hygiene habits for infants and young children. The campaign focused on educating parents and caregivers about the importance of early oral healthcare and teething management.

[Two educational handouts](#) on babies' oral health and teething were developed and distributed to families through Let's Grow clinics and HBHC program home visits. To accompany the educational resources, staff also distributed infant toothbrushes to parents as a practical tool to reinforce the messages shared. The key messages have also been shared on RCDHU social media platforms.

To date, 60 toothbrushes (for children 0-2 years old) have been distributed and parents have reported appreciation for the practical guidance and resources.

New Online Prenatal Program:

In June, RCDHU, in partnership with South East Health Unit, launched *Bump to Baby*, a free online prenatal education program.

Bump to Baby is designed to support parents-to-be with information and resources that can be completed at their own pace, providing flexibility to learn when it's most convenient for them.

The program guides expectant parents through all stages of pregnancy, birth, and newborn care, with topics including:

- Pregnancy
- Labor and delivery
- Feeding your baby
- Caring for your baby and keeping them safe
- Parenting
- Helpful services available in the community

Families can register for the program online through our RCDHU website or by calling RCDHU's family health intake line and speaking with a public health nurse.

Strengthening Families Program

The Strengthening Families Program (SFP) is an evidence-based, family skills training program that is recognized both nationally and internationally. Parents and youth attend weekly SFP skills classes together, learning parenting skills and youth life and refusal skills. Parents and youth have separate classes during the first hour, followed by a joint family practice session during the second hour. RCDHU staff co-facilitate the program in partnership with Addiction Treatments Services (ATS), the Phoenix Centre, and the Youth Wellness Hub.

The 2025 spring SFP session, which took place at the Phoenix Centre, concluded during May. Five families completed the program. Post-program surveys were completed and collected and will be compiled by ATS. Participants, including the youth, made great progress in being able to share and discuss in front of the group, and were grateful to have been able to participate. Some of the parents indicated that they would like to complete the program again when their younger children reach the age of program eligibility.

Measles Response Redeployment

In response to local measles cases, and in accordance with our preparedness planning, harm reduction and Outreach Team nurses were redeployed to assist with measles case and contact management and testing. They completed home visits for case and contact management, performed in-home testing as needed for measles contacts, developed procedures related to case and contact management and testing, provided training for testing, assembled in-home testing kits to ensure accurate and safe collection of measles samples, and assisted with workload coverage for sexual health and other infectious diseases service delivery.

Submitted by:

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