



Medical Officer of Health Report to the Board

Tuesday, May 28th, 2024

Health Promotion

"Let's Grow" – Healthy Growth and Development Immunization Program

Description of Program:

Renfrew County and District Health Unit (RCDHU) has previously offered immunization and healthy growth and development services separately for families of children aged 0-4 years. Beginning in June 2024, RCDHU staff will implement the Healthy Growth and Development Immunization Program called "Let's Grow".

The program is new, aiming to provide comprehensive public health services to young children and their families. By increasing staff capacity to support both healthy growth and development and immunization services, it not only decreases duplication of public health services, but it also enhances a client-centered approach to service delivery. The program also increases access to immunization services for vulnerable populations and residents in Renfrew County and District (RCD) not able to access immunizations through primary care. From an emergency management perspective, this program supports preparedness in the event of a vaccine preventable disease emergency.

The program will incorporate an intake assessment of immunization status and health topics that are mandated under the current Ontario Public Health Standards (OPHS), that clients would like to have addressed during their appointment. For example, mental health, infant feeding, growth and development, sexual health, and nutrition. The program will deliver services in a clinic format by appointment in the following geographical areas: Pembroke, Renfrew, Arnprior, and Barry's Bay. This is based on evidence of need and is subject to change based on continued collection of data. The program will deliver services in both English and French through bilingual staff and resources.

Evaluation:

The program will utilize the RCDHU Client Satisfaction Survey to incorporate client feedback in the planning and continuous quality improvement of program design.

Alignment with Strategic Direction and Goals:

Service Excellence

- Take a client-centred approach.
- Support collaborative efforts on the social determinants of health and recognize the needs of equity-deserving groups.
- Enhance operations that focus on children and youth, emergency preparedness, mental health, and substance use.

Workplace Wellness

- Invest in a skilled workforce that is committed to service excellence, continuous quality improvement, and emergency preparedness.

Partnerships

- Continue to collaboratively monitor local health needs to drive equitable community action.

Substance Use Harms

Renfrew County and District Drug Strategy:

In April, RCDHU, alongside the Ottawa Valley Ontario Health Team (OVOHT), hosted the inaugural Renfrew County and District Drug Strategy (RCDDS) Steering Committee meeting. Leaders from multi-sectoral partner organizations were represented, and Dr. Morgenstern and Jama Watt from the OVOHT co-chaired. The Steering Committee will lead and guide the development of the RCDDS, which aims to minimize substance use related harms in Renfrew County and District. Working groups related to prevention, treatment, harm reduction, and community safety are being established. The principles of equity, compassion, and collaboration will guide the process.

Opioid Overdose Response:

Renfrew County and District Health Unit (RCDHU) has developed an interactive dashboard called *Substance use-related harms in Renfrew County and District (RCD)*. The purpose of this dashboard is to provide individuals and community partners with an overview of current substance use-related trends in RCD such as:

- Opioid overdose-related emergency department (ED) visits to local hospitals
- Opioid-related deaths
- Suspect drug poisoning deaths

The dashboard can be found on the RCDHU webpage [here](#) within the new [Health Statistics](#) section.

This dashboard will be updated quarterly or as data becomes available. Data for recent quarters is considered preliminary and subject to change in future updates. Data is primarily sourced from the Office of the Chief Coroner of Ontario and the National Ambulatory Care Reporting System (NARCS) via the Ministry of Health.

Content in this dashboard may be sensitive to viewers. RCDHU acknowledges all families, friends, and loved ones of individuals who have lost their lives to substance use, as well as the individuals themselves. Anyone who is experiencing feelings of stress, anxiety, or grief can find supports on RCDHU's [Mental Health](#) webpage.

To support more efficient reporting by partner organizations, RCDHU launched a new [online reporting form](#) for suspect overdoses.

RCDHU continues to provide training on our programs and services, safe handling of sharps, and naloxone.

Healthy Babies, Healthy Children Program

Description of Program:

The Healthy Babies Healthy Children Home Visiting Program is an early intervention program for families confirmed through screening and assessment as being with risk of compromised child development.

This voluntary program, funded by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) and delivered by staff from RCDHU, provides families in the prenatal period and families with children from birth until their transition to school with opportunities to achieve their full potential.

The HBHC Program intends to optimize growth and development and reduce health inequities for families receiving services. The program components include:

- system integration,
- access to information and resources,
- early identification and intervention,
- assessments,
- service coordination,
- referral to community services,
- research and evaluation

Clients may access our services through self-referrals or professional referrals.

Reporting:

The HBHC program has six key service-level indicators that are monitored and reported on to MCCSS. These indicators include:

1. Number of Prenatal HBHC screens completed
2. Number of Postpartum HBHC screens completed
3. Number of Early Childhood HBHC screens completed
4. Number of individuals confirmed with risk
5. Number of families with two or more home visits
6. Number of individuals who received an In-depth Assessment

For the 2023/2024 fiscal year, RCDHU staff either reached or exceeded the target numbers for each indicator except for the prenatal and postpartum screens. Preliminary data suggest that this is due to a decrease in the number of births for RCD. In 2022/2023, RCD reported 1077 live births. In comparison, in 2023/2024 RCD reported 973 live births.

Health Protection

Healthy Environments

Rabies Control Programming:

RCDHU is running the yellow-ribbon campaign once again. It was well received last year by residents. The campaign promotes the wearing of a yellow ribbon or collar or scarf around a dog's neck to let people know to approach with caution, thereby reducing the likelihood of unintended animal bites and unnecessary health care visits. Several veterinary clinics and pet stores across the health unit are promoting the campaign, offering free yellow ribbons and information cards.

Vector Borne Disease Programming:

Springtime is tick time! Public health inspectors are conducting active surveillance for ticks - or tick dragging - in seven strategic areas in RCD. The discovery of ticks in the spring will require a second drag at the same location in the fall. If ticks are found at the

same location in both seasons, this will designate the area as high-risk, facilitating patient diagnosis and treatment protocols to mitigate health risks.

Emergency Management Programming:

RCDHU conducted a staff debrief on the respiratory season to evaluate our public health response during the 2023-2024 season. The findings were shared with the Ministry of Health, informing future respiratory pathogen planning, preparedness, and response at the provincial and local levels.

The Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (HIRA) evaluation for 2024 is underway. This assessment indicates the most critical hazards within our community and helps guide the development or modification of response plans to effectively mitigate these risks.

RCDHU participated in a provincial extreme heat emergency exercise as an active observer.

Work is also being completed on an after-action review (AAR) of RCDHU's management of the COVID-19 pandemic. This comprehensive review will elicit feedback from staff and partners, assessing their perspectives and insights to enhance the agency's response for future public health emergencies.

Immunization

COVID-19 Vaccine:

The Ontario Spring COVID-19 vaccine campaign is running from April to June 2024. The following individuals are recommended to receive an XBB COVID-19 Vaccine if it has been 6 months from their previous COVID-19 vaccine dose or known SARS-CoV-2 infection (whichever is later):

- Adults 65 years of age and older.
- Adult residents of long-term care homes and other congregate living settings for seniors.
- Individuals 6 months of age and older who are moderately to severely immunocompromised (due to an underlying condition or treatment).
- Individuals 55 years and older who identify as First Nations, Inuit, or Metis and their non-Indigenous household members who are 55 years and older.

COVID-19 vaccine remains accessible through participating pharmacies in Renfrew County and District (RCD). Additionally, RCDHU is offering mobile vaccine services to retirement homes in RCD and will continue to offer limited booked appointments for higher risk individuals as specified above.

Immunization of School Pupils Act (ISPA):

Efforts to ensure ISPA requirements are met have shown significant progress since January 2024. Out of an estimated 3800 students initially identified as overdue or lacking necessary immunization documentation, approximately 1700 have been brought up to date, as of May 14, 2024.

Since January 2024, RCDHU has hosted 11 ISPA high school clinics, 19 ISPA community clinics, and administered roughly 1100 doses of ISPA related vaccines to approximately 800 clients born between 2006-2019.

To further facilitate ISPA catch up efforts, approximately 600 second reminder notices have been sent to students born in 2006, 2016, and 2019 during April and May. Students can continue to access immunization services through an RCDHU community immunization clinic, or through their health care provider.

Infectious Diseases

Overall:

Respiratory illness activity has been decreasing over the past month. As seen in the [Respiratory Illness Data Summary in Renfrew County and District](#) update on May 21, all indicators show “low” or “moderate” weekly activity.

Outbreaks:

Respiratory-related outbreak activity over the past month has been low and steady, with an average of 1 new respiratory outbreak declared each week (responsible pathogens include rhinovirus, Human Metapneumovirus, and seasonal coronavirus). The last influenza outbreak was declared on March 25th, while the last COVID-19 outbreak was declared on April 10th. There is currently 1 active respiratory outbreak in RCD (as of May 21st).

Test Percent Positivity and Cases:

As of May 4th, a total of 105 influenza cases were reported to RCDHU (76 influenza A cases and 29 influenza B cases), with roughly half reported in the month of March. Weekly case numbers and percent positivity for influenza have trended downward over the past few weeks on a local and Provincial level. With respect to COVID-19, an

average of 5 cases per week were reported to RCDHU over the past month. Percent positivity at the Provincial, regional, and local level remain low, with local positivity currently sitting around 3%.

Wastewater:

Local COVID-19 wastewater signals from both Pembroke and Petawawa sampling sites continue to trend downward, in line with Provincial and regional trends. Influenza A and B signals are also decreasing, after peak activity was observed at the end of December 2023 and March 2024, respectively.

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