



Health Promotion and Infectious Diseases Report to the Board of Health

Tuesday, November 25, 2025

HEALTH PROMOTION

Nutrition – Algonquin College Education for Early Childhood Educator Students

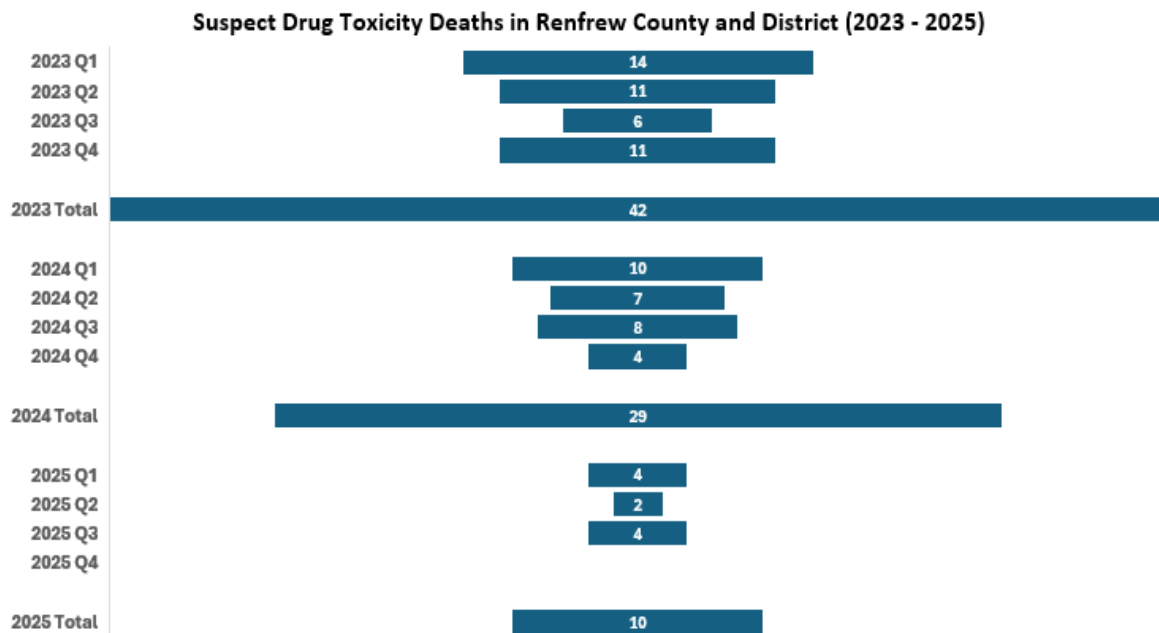
In October, the Renfrew County and District Health Unit delivered its annual education session to 22 Early Childhood Education (ECE) students at Algonquin College's Pembroke campus. The session focused on nutrition requirements in licensed childcare settings, as mandated by the *Child Care and Early Years Act* and Ontario Licensing Manual, ensuring alignment with Canada's Food Guide. Students gained evidence-based knowledge and practical strategies to implement these standards, emphasizing supportive mealtime environments, food literacy, and positive feeding relationships. This collaboration strengthens future ECE capacity and aligns with the Ontario Public Health Standards by promoting child and family health through education and community partnership.

Outreach Team and SPRITE Testing

The Outreach Team continues to expand RCDHU services across Renfrew County & District through partnerships with community agencies. In September and October, the team conducted 19 visits to 10 sites, distributing 184 naloxone kits and training 66 new individuals. Over 500 client interactions occurred, which included harm reduction services, sexual health consultations, sexually transmitted and bloodborne infection testing, and referrals to mental health and other public health programs. In October, a vaccine clinic was held at The Grind, providing flu, COVID-19, and RSV vaccines to underhoused individuals and people experiencing homelessness. Additional clinics are planned. SPRITE testing for syphilis, HIV, and hepatitis C remains available at outreach events and RCDHU's Pembroke office; 18 tests were completed, identifying six new infections, with all clients referred for treatment.

Renfrew County and District Drug Strategy (RCDDS)

In October, a 3rd quarter progress report was issued for partners of the RCDDS, as well as a public update on social media and the RCDDS [webpage](#). The indicators reported in October were suspected drug toxicity deaths, suspected deaths by sex, emergency department visits and an update on naloxone distribution. Most notable was the continued progress in reducing suspected drug toxicity-related mortality. When compared to the same period in 2024 and 2023, there has been a 60% and 68% decrease in suspected drug toxicity deaths respectively. While there are many factors responsible for this decline, there is cautious optimism that the local efforts of the more than 30 organizations implementing the strategy's priorities are having a measurable impact.



The four pillar working groups continue to meet at least quarterly and a social media campaign was developed by the communications collaborative to highlight the many extraordinary efforts being made and some of the related outcomes.

Renfrew County & District Drug Strategy

Renfrew County & District Drug Strategy

Mesa Warming Centre
[mey-suh]

PROGRESS UPDATE

In 2024, the Mesa Warming Centre had 83 total guests, 89% from Pembroke, 6% from other areas of the county, and 5% from outside the county.

Renfrew
A collaborative approach to compassionate care

RCDHU Outreach Team Member engaging community members on trails and other rural areas.

A mental health case worker and Mesa paramedic speak with a client outside The Grind - an organization that serves the needs of marginalized, at-risk community members in Pembroke.

PROGRESS UPDATE

Drug Strategy partners implemented an outreach model to provide harm reduction and other health services to people in high need. It's about meeting people where they're at.

www.rcdhu.com/rcdds

www.rcdhu.com/rcdds

The Medical Officer of Health, along with the Substance Use and Harm Reduction Program team, met with the Ministry of the Attorney General's Crown Attorney Office in Pembroke to discuss RCDDs and explore collaboration opportunities. As a result, a team member of their office will join the Community Safety Working Group, and new processes were implemented to ensure individuals released from custody have rapid and routine access to take-home naloxone kits.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Measles Outbreak Status

On October 6th, Ontario's multi-jurisdictional measles outbreak was officially declared over. However, the World Health Organization confirmed on November 10th that Canada has lost its measles elimination status after over 12 months of sustained transmission of the same measles strain. Canada first attained measles elimination status in 1998 and has never lost it until now.

The outbreak began in October 2024 with an international traveler attending a New Brunswick wedding, subsequently spreading to southwestern Ontario where it concentrated among under-vaccinated communities. There were ultimately 2376 cases in Ontario's outbreak, including 3 cases in Renfrew County and District. A strong local response prevented further transmission across our region.

For RCDHU, this reinforces the importance of maintaining high MMR vaccination coverage, which will be supported by our return to full enforcement of the Immunization of School Pupils Act early next year. Canada can regain elimination status once transmission is interrupted for at least 12 consecutive months.

Respiratory Illness Activity

Respiratory outbreak activity in September and October remained low, averaging fewer than one new outbreak per week compared to two per week in October 2024. Most outbreaks with an identified pathogen were caused by Rhinovirus or COVID-19.

The first influenza case of the 2025–2026 season was reported to RCDHU in early November. The Canadian Network of Public Health Intelligence projects higher circulation of Influenza A (H3N2) in Canada this season, which may increase healthcare demand and underscores the importance of vaccination and surveillance.

Fall Preparedness

On October 15, 2025, the infectious diseases team hosted a fall preparedness workshop for local long-term care and retirement homes, in collaboration with the Regional IPAC Hub and RCDHU's immunization team. The session covered infection prevention and control topics, including roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders, seasonal vaccinations, and outbreak management. Guest speaker Ajak Ajang, Manager of the Champlain Regional IPAC Hub, joined the event. Representatives from 14 long-term care and retirement homes attended virtually, achieving over 70% participation. Follow-up sessions are being offered to facilities that were unable to attend.

Submitted by:
Patti Smith
Director, Health Promotion and Chief Nursing Officer
Renfrew County and District Health Unit