



Medical Officer of Health Report to the Board

Tuesday, September 23rd, 2025

Health Protection

Infectious Diseases

Measles in Renfrew County and District (RCD):

In July, Renfrew County and District Health Unit (RCDHU) confirmed an additional measles case associated with the Ontario-wide outbreak. Once again, RCDHU took a proactive approach with case and contact management. Targeted post-exposure vaccination clinics were quickly stepped up to prevent further cases. Overall, RCDHU identified, followed up with, and communicated with approximately 120 contacts.

Ongoing efforts focus on engaging at-risk populations to promote immunization and ensure completion of the measles immunization series.

Measles Outbreak in Ontario:

RCDHU continues to monitor provincial measles epidemiology closely. There have been significantly fewer cases across the province since mid-June, and fewer than 10 weekly cases since the beginning of August.

Over the course of the outbreak, the majority (73%) of cases were among infants, children, and adolescents, 96% of whom were unvaccinated.

Respiratory Indicators:

Since the beginning of July, respiratory illness indicators have been low with some variability in outbreaks and COVID-19 test percent positivity. RCD is experiencing less than 1 outbreak per week. Local influenza and RSV test percent positivity is low. COVID-19 percent positivity is beginning to trend upward into the high range; however, overall COVID-19 indicators are lower than they were at this time last year. Hospital bed occupancy due to respiratory illness is low. Emergency department visits related to respiratory illness remain low.

Immunization

Grade 7 School Based Immunization Program:

RCDHU staff have initiated the first round of school-based Grade 7 immunization clinics for the 2025-2026 school year. Approximately 1100 Grade 7 students across the region are eligible to receive Hepatitis B, Meningococcal, and Human Papillomavirus vaccines through these clinics. Up to 42 school-based clinics have been scheduled throughout

the fall, with plans for round two clinics in the spring of 2026. As of September 10, 2025, 3 school clinics had been successfully completed.

Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV):

Starting this fall, Ontario is expanding the publicly funded RSV prevention program to include all individuals aged 75 years and older. This is in addition to adults aged 60 to 74 who meet high-risk criteria or live in higher risk settings. Only individuals who have not received a previous dose are eligible, as the vaccine provides multiple years of protection. RSV vaccination will be available through residents' healthcare provider or through RCDHU community immunization clinics. RSV vaccinations will not be available through pharmacies.

Ontario has also announced that the infant RSV prevention program will resume this fall. This program includes all infants born after March 31, 2025 and children under 2 years of age with high-risk medical conditions. Together with healthcare partners, RCDHU will ensure access to RSV immunization for this high-risk population.

Influenza and COVID-19 Annual Fall Campaign:

This year's updated influenza and COVID-19 vaccines are expected by the end of September. RCDHU will offer mobile clinics to retirement homes and congregate care settings, along with community immunization clinics in October for high-risk individuals. Starting in November, the general population will be eligible, and RCDHU will continue community immunization clinics for both the influenza and COVID-19 vaccines. Furthermore, the pharmacy channel will continue to serve as an access point to receive both vaccines.

Healthy Environments

Rabies Control Program:

RCDHU public health inspector staff continue to investigate potential human rabies exposures as part of the health protection mandate. RCDHU has seen an unprecedented increase in bat exposures this year, particularly over the warm summer months. These exposures resulted in a greatly increased need for post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) vaccination and immunoglobulin for those exposed, with PEP administered to 65 people in July and August. Furthermore, there have been 64 bat-related exposure investigations completed so far in 2025. Overall, in 2025, 36 animals have been submitted for rabies testing. Of these, 27 were bat submissions and one of those was positive for rabies in July. As a result, RCDHU issued a [media release](#) to notify the public and reinforce public health and safety messaging.

Safe Water Program:

Public Beach Sampling occurs during the busy summer season when recreational swimming is most popular. The sampling program started at the end of June and ended in the last week of August. No beaches needed to be posted as unsafe to swim due to bacteria levels this summer. However, there was one beach posting due to the presence of a blue-green algae bloom.

Vector borne Disease Control Program:

RCDHU completed the mosquito testing program once again this past summer (over a

10-week period). A total of 119 mosquito pools were tested for West Nile virus from 48 trapping locations across RCD. All mosquito pools tested negative for West Nile virus this year.

Emergency Preparedness and Response

RCDHU responded to four multi-day heat events and two multi-day air quality events from June to the end of August. In each instance, RCDHU issued timely notifications to both community partners and the public, accompanied by health and safety messaging to mitigate risks associated with extreme environmental conditions.

To further support vulnerable populations, RCDHU invited municipal partners to share information about any cooling centres or clean air shelters they were operating. This information was used to enhance public awareness and ensure targeted outreach to priority populations. RCDHU also provided recommendations to agencies and organizations serving these groups.

Following the confirmed measles cases in April, RCDHU facilitated structured debrief sessions with staff and management. These sessions focused on identifying lessons learned and opportunities for quality improvement to strengthen future emergency outbreak response and coordination.

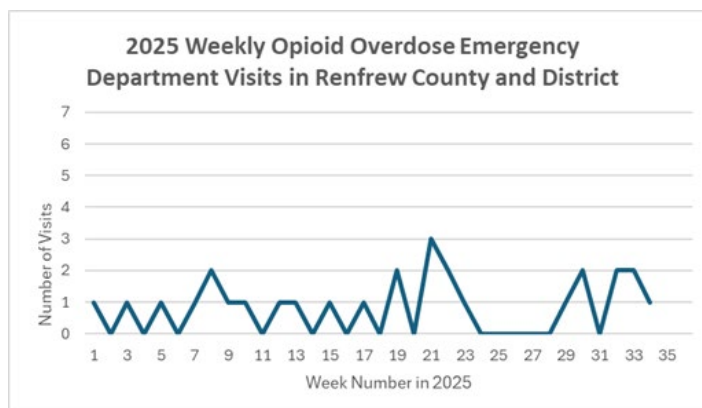
Health Promotion

Renfrew County and District Drug Strategy (RCDDS)

Implementation of the priorities of the RCDDS is underway and a mid-year [progress report](#) and [media release](#) were published in July to update the public and partner organizations on some of the early successes across the four pillars of the RCDDS.

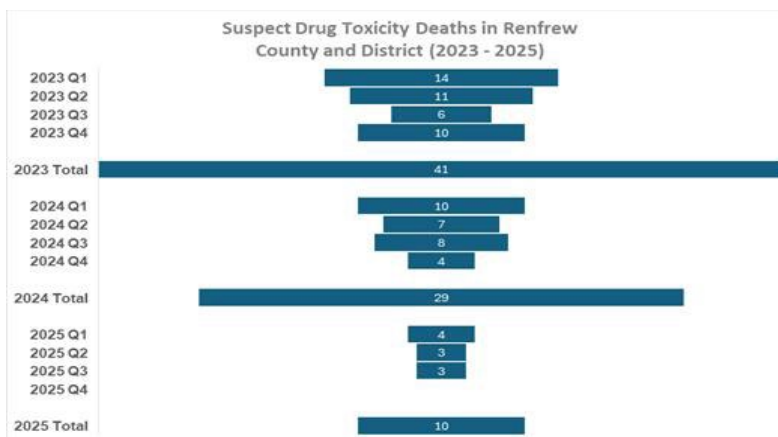
RCDDS Substance Use Harm Indicators:

As of August 24th, there were 28 emergency department visits related to opioid overdoses, which is an increase of 8 since the June update. This represents a 59% decrease, when compared to the 69 visits that occurred during the same period in 2024.



As of August 28th, there had been 3 additional suspect drug toxicity deaths since our

previous update and 10 since the beginning of the year. This represents a 60% decrease, when compared to the 25 deaths that occurred during the same period in 2024 and a 68% decrease in contrast to 2023.



Outreach Team and SPRITE Testing

The Outreach Team continues to bring RCDHU services to clients across RCD and forge new partnerships with community agencies. In 2025, as of the end of August, the Outreach Team had completed 76 visits to 19 different sites across RCD. During those visits, 384 naloxone kits were distributed and 241 new people were trained in their use. The Team had over 1700 interactions with clients throughout these visits. The Team continues to provide harm reduction and sexual health supplies, offer sexual health testing, and connect clients to other RCDHU services or community partners where needed.

SPRITE testing continues to be offered at Outreach Team events and at RCDHU's Pembroke office. As of Aug 31st, 188 tests for syphilis, HIV, and hepatitis C have been completed under this program. Individuals that test positive have been successfully referred for follow-up and treatment. Most of the clients tested are at high risk for acquiring sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections and do not have a family doctor or the means to seek out testing on their own.

Measles Redeployment

In response to a reported case of measles in the community in July, Health Promotion nurses and support staff were redeployed to assist with measles contact management and testing. In-home testing for measles was completed by the Outreach Team. Staff from the Healthy Babies Healthy Children, Sexual Health, and Outreach programs supported the response with measles vaccinations, contact management, and workload coverage for other infectious diseases.

Oral Health

Summer Community Dental Screening Clinics:

Over the summer months, RCDHU's school oral health Registered Dental Hygienists (RDHs) hosted 8 community dental screening clinics across RCD, in partnership with

local public libraries. Alongside RCDHU staff, Service Canada staff attended to promote and enroll clients in the federally funded oral health program, the Canadian Dental Care Plan (CDCP). RCDHU staff integrated the feedback from last year's screening clinics, making this year even more successful. RCDHU staff screened and assisted a total of 113 RCD residents, including 13 infants, 42 children, 41 adults, and 17 seniors.

In addition to dental screenings, RCDHU staff provided 22 fluoride applications and directly enrolled 12 individuals into provincially funded oral health programs. They also addressed a wide range of oral health questions and helped connect families with appropriate dental coverage to ensure they can access the care they need. Clinics were hosted in Petawawa, Whitney, Arnprior, Killaloe, Deep River, Pembroke, Renfrew, and Calabogie.



Samantha Zadow, RDH (left) and Michala Vanderploeg, RDH (right) at the Petawawa Public Library.

Submitted by:

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