



Medical Officer of Health Report to the Board

June 25th, 2026

HEALTH PROTECTION

Immunization

Immunization Surveillance for Licensed Child Care:

RCDHU is working with licensed child care operators across Renfrew County and District (RCD) to begin immunization surveillance in accordance with the Child Care and Early Years Act. There are 28 licensed child care facilities in RCD, with approximately 1102 enrolled children. Staff have reviewed immunization records for all enrolled children. On June 5th, 2026, 271 immunization notices were issued to parents and legal guardians of children with incomplete records or overdue immunizations required for child care attendance. Families requiring immunization services may book an appointment at an RCDHU community clinic or visit their health care provider. Parents and legal guardians are responsible for reporting updated immunization records to both the child care provider and RCDHU.

COVID-19 Vaccine:

The Spring 2026 COVID-19 vaccination campaign, running from April to June, targets individuals at higher risk of severe infection. Eligible individuals can receive vaccinations at participating pharmacies, participating health care providers, and RCDHU clinics.

As of May 27th, 2026, all 12 planned mobile clinics in retirement homes had been completed, along with one mobile clinic in a congregate care setting. As of June 9th, 2026, RCDHU had administered 572 COVID-19 vaccine doses for the Spring campaign through clinics and mobile services.

Grade 7 Program:

RCDHU completed all second-round Grade 7 school-based immunization clinics for the 2025-2026 school year between early March and the last week of May. Across 36 school clinics, 1359 doses of hepatitis B, meningococcal, and human papillomavirus vaccines were administered to eligible students. Compared with the second round of the 2024-2025 school year, the doses administered increased from 1259 to 1359 (8%). Staff have completed follow-up with students

Cold Chain Inspections:

RCDHU's vaccine inventory team is preparing for annual cold chain inspections at all facilities in RCD that order and store publicly funded vaccines. Approximately 120 vaccine storage units are expected to be inspected in 2026. Inspections are scheduled from June to August, and 25 had been completed as of June 9th, 2026.

Healthy Environments

Recreational Water Program:

Beach water sampling is scheduled to begin the week of June 15th and will continue through to the end of August as part of seasonal recreational water monitoring. Regular sampling throughout the summer helps assess water quality at designated beaches and supports timely public health communication when results indicate that swimming conditions may pose a risk to the public. There are 30 beaches that will be sampled this summer.

Legionnaires' disease:

A memorandum is being sent to health care providers to raise awareness of legionellosis (Legionnaires' disease) in response to an early seasonal increase in cases reported across Ontario. Locally, one case of legionellosis has been investigated in 2026. Since 2020, there have been 3 reported cases of legionellosis in RCD. The notice reminds providers to maintain clinical vigilance for patients presenting with pneumonia or compatible respiratory symptoms, particularly among older adults and others at higher risk of severe illness. A similar communication will also be distributed to congregate living facilities to reinforce prevention, early recognition, and timely reporting in settings that serve more vulnerable populations.

Vector Borne Disease Program:

A media release was distributed in early June to raise awareness about ticks and tick-borne diseases and to remind the public to take preventive measures as tick activity increases during the spring and summer months. The release encourages residents to check themselves, children, and pets for ticks after spending time outdoors, wear long sleeves and pants in wooded or grassy areas, and to use effective insect repellent. It also highlighted the importance of early tick removal and monitoring for symptoms of tick-borne illness such as Lyme disease.

Active tick surveillance (tick dragging) was completed at four surveillance locations in May to monitor local tick activity. Only one of the four locations yielded a tick, suggesting low tick presence at the sites sampled during this round of surveillance.

The West Nile virus mosquito surveillance program will begin on the week of June 21st and will last 10 weeks. This monitoring program tests mosquitoes for West Nile virus and Eastern Equine Encephalitis - diseases transmitted by mosquitoes to humans.

Emergency Preparedness and Response

RCD experienced localized flooding this past spring. RCDHU staff participated in 15 freshet meetings with municipalities and the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. The freshet meeting group stood down on May 20th. Several municipalities along the Ottawa River experienced localized flooding. RCDHU continues to offer well water testing for residents and is actively promoting testing through its social media platforms to support community health and safety.

As flooding and wildfire concerns continue in Ontario, RCDHU previously reported in May that it was exploring opportunities to support First Nation evacuation planning with the local Indigenous community and the Ministry of Health. RCDHU was recently made aware that it is no longer considered a possible destination for evacuees as other regions with greater capacity and supports have been chosen. RCDHU remains committed to supporting partners in future evacuation planning efforts.

HEALTH PROMOTION AND INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) Program

RCDHU is launching the Nurse-Family Partnership program, making it one of eight public health units in Ontario currently delivering this initiative.

NFP is an evidence-based program that supports expectant mothers—particularly those with low incomes—from early pregnancy until their child is approximately two years of age. Each participant is paired with a public health nurse (PHN) who provides regular home visits, fostering a trusted relationship and offering personalized guidance. The program focuses on promoting healthy pregnancies through education on prenatal care, nutrition, and risk reduction, while also preparing mothers for childbirth and early parenting.

NFP also aims to improve child health and development and enhance maternal self-sufficiency. PHNs support parents in understanding child development, strengthening caregiver-child relationships, and achieving developmental milestones. The program further assists mothers in setting long-term goals related to education, employment, and life planning, with connections to community resources as needed. Evidence shows NFP contributes to improved maternal and child outcomes, reduced child maltreatment, and increased family stability. Furthermore, NFP was a priority program identified under the prevention pillar of the Renfrew County and District Drug Strategy.

To support implementation, staff capacity is being strengthened through enhanced training. Five PHNs and the program manager will participate in a five-day, in-person training session beginning in June to ensure consistent, high-quality service delivery.

Renfrew County and District Drug Strategy

The Renfrew County and District Drug Strategy has entered its second year of implementation. To mark this milestone, the Steering Committee convened on June 11th to evaluate progress on the 25 identified priorities and to determine areas of focus for the remainder of 2026.

Ongoing monitoring and surveillance of local substance use medical emergencies identified an increase in calls to emergency services over Victoria Day weekend. In response, a Drug Toxicity Response Plan partner communication was issued to inform them of the increase and reinforce harm reduction key messages.

Similar trends are being observed across provincial and national jurisdictions, with rising substance use-related emergency calls. These increases are largely attributed to the growing presence of high potency opioids in combination with veterinary tranquilizers and benzodiazepine-related substances within the fentanyl supply. This was noted in the most recent report from [Toronto's Drug Checking Service](#) where they found that 87% of the expected fentanyl samples contained at least one other central nervous and/or respiratory system depressant, including veterinary tranquilizers and/or benzodiazepine-related drugs. Using high potency opioids in combination with other central nervous and/or respiratory system depressants increases the risk of dangerous suppression of vitals (e.g., slowing down of breathing, blood pressure, and heart rate) while also complicating overdose response. Harm reduction and outreach staff are working with Algonquins of Pikwakanagan Mental

Health and Health Services teams to increase harm reduction services through education and improved access.

Since the last report, there have been 3 additional suspect drug toxicity deaths, bringing the total to 13 in 2026. Emergency department visits remain relatively low with 11 visits as of May 24th.

Public Health Outreach and Sexual Health

RCDHU's Outreach team has expanded its presence and services offered throughout RCD as warmer weather arrives. Overall, outreach events have increased by 50%, with a total of 20 Outreach events in May and a similar number projected for the month of June. Sexually transmitted and blood-borne infection (STBBI) testing has been successfully expanded to new partner locations to better meet the needs of community partners and improve access to sexual health screening services.

The Mesa Mobile Outreach Drug Testing Partnership Program, which offers mobile, real-time drug checking, has continued throughout the month of May with collaborative events occurring in Arnprior, Renfrew, and Killaloe. As of May 29th, a total of 13 drug samples had been tested, and clients were supported with real-time information to make safer, informed decisions.

SPRITE (the Syphilis Point-of-Care Rapid Testing and Immediate Treatment Evaluation study) testing for STBBIs continues to be offered at suitable Outreach Team events and at RCDHU's Pembroke office. Since its implementation in August of 2024, RCDHU nurses have completed 238 tests for syphilis, HIV, and HCV for individuals at higher risk of infection. Individuals who tested positive have been treated and/or referred to appropriate specialists.

Nutrition – 2026 Nutritious Food Basket Costing

In June, RCDHU commenced annual Nutritious Food Basket costing at local grocery stores across RCD as development of the 2026 Monitoring Food Affordability in Renfrew County and District report gets underway. Costing is conducted during this period across Ontario public health units to support consistency in data collection and strengthen the comparability of findings across jurisdictions. This work remains an important component of ongoing public health surveillance related to food affordability and household food insecurity.

Infectious Diseases

Rabies Post-Exposure Prophylaxis Initiative:

On May 15th, 2026, RCDHU implemented a Rabies Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (RPEP) program to support its primary/urgent care partners and clients by directly offering RPEP throughout RCD.

Historically, health care providers in hospital emergency departments have been responsible for administering the full RPEP regimen, including immunoglobulin and the day 0 vaccine dose, followed by vaccine doses on days 3, 7, 14, and 28 (for immunocompromised patients).

As of mid-May, the infectious disease team, healthy environments team, and emergency departments have collaborated in developing a new care pathway by offering patients days 3, 7, 14, and 28 doses at RCDHU as part of regular case management. This reduces the burden on emergency department health care providers, maintains the highest standard of care, improves the patient experience by providing one-on-one follow-up with reduced or zero wait time, and helps to reduce system-level emergency department wait times.

Ebola Outbreak Update (DRC and Uganda):

On May 15th, 2026, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Uganda declared an Ebola outbreak caused by the Bundibugyo virus. There are no suspected or confirmed cases in Ontario, and the risk to local residents remains low. RCDHU's Infectious Disease team is monitoring the situation closely and supporting partners with preparedness. The Ministry of Health is working with health system partners to strengthen testing and treatment readiness.

Submitted by:

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