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The Regional Municipality of Durham Information Report

From: Commissioner & Medical Officer of Health
Report: #2025-INFO-07
Date: January 31, 2025

Subject:

Program Reports

Recommendation:

Receive for information

Report:

1. Purpose

1.1 To provide an update on Durham Region Health Department (DRHD) programs and services for the period October – December 2024.

2. Highlights

2.1 DRHD reports for October – December 2024 include the following key highlights:

- a. Health Analytics, Policy & Research – Health Analytics Information Products and Health Policy & Equity updates;
- b. Health Protection – Emergency Management, Food Safety, Healthy Environments, Part 8 Ontario *Building Code* (Sewage Systems) and Safe Water updates;
- c. Healthy Families – Durham Health Connection Line, Healthy Babies Healthy Children, Healthy Families and Infant & Child Development updates;
- d. Healthy Living – Healthy Living, Oral Health and *Smoke-Free Ontario Act, 2017* updates;
- e. Infectious Diseases – Immunization and Infectious Diseases Prevention & Control updates; and

- f. Paramedic Services – Community Paramedicine, Logistics, Operations and Quality & Development updates.

2.2 Boards of health are required to “superintend, provide or ensure the provision of the health programs and services required by the [Health Protection and Promotion] Act and the regulations to the persons who reside in the health unit served by the board” (section 4, clause a, HPPA). In addition, medical officers of health are required to “[report] directly to the board of health on issues relating to public health concerns and to public health programs and services under this or any other Act” (sub-section 67.(1), HPPA). Accordingly, the Health Information Update is a component of DRHD’s ‘Accountability Framework’, which also may include program and other reports, Health Plans, Quality Enhancement Plans, Durham Health Check-Ups, business plans and budgets; provincial performance indicators and targets, monitoring, compliance audits and assessments; RDPS certification; and accreditation by Accreditation Canada.

3. Relationship to Strategic Plan

3.1 This report and the program updates included align with the following strategic goals and priorities in the 2020 – 2024 Durham Region Strategic Plan:

a. Goal 1 – Environmental Sustainability:

- 1.4 Demonstrate leadership in sustainability and addressing climate change.

b. Goal 2 – Community Vitality:

- 2.2 Enhance community safety and well-being.
- 2.3 Influence the social determinants of health to improve outcomes for vulnerable populations.
- 2.4 Support a high quality of life for all through human services delivery.

c. Goal 5 – Service Excellence:

- 5.1 Optimize resources and partnerships to deliver exceptional quality services and value.
- 5.2 Collaborate for seamless service experience.
- 5.3 Demonstrate commitment to continuous quality improvement and communicating results.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1 Program Reports are provided to update Regional Council (DRHD's board of health) on public health programs and activities as a component of DRHD's Accountability Framework.

5. Attachment

Program Reports for the period October – December 2024

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

R.J. Kyle, BSc, MD, MHSc, CCFP, FRCPC, FACPM
Commissioner & Medical Officer of Health

ABBREVIATIONS

- AIDS – Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
- AEFI – Adverse Events Following Immunization
- AWQI – Adverse Water Quality Incidents
- CCC – Child Care Centres
- CP – Community Paramedicine
- DHCL – Durham Health Connection Line
- DoPHS – Diseases of Public Health Significance
- DPZ – Detailed Planning Zone
- DRHD – Durham Region Health Department
- DRSSD – Durham Region Social Services Department
- ED – Emergency Department
- EPDS – Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale
- HBHC – Healthy Babies Healthy Children
- HC – Health Canada
- HCP – Healthcare Providers
- HH5 – Hedgehog 5
- HIV – Human Immunodeficiency Virus
- HPD – Health Protection Division
- HPE – Health Policy & Equity
- HPPA – *Health Protection and Promotion Act*
- HPV9 – Human Papillomavirus 9
- ICD – Infant & Child Development
- iGAS – Invasive Group A Streptococcal Disease
- IPAC – Infection Prevention & Control
- ISPA – *Immunization of School Pupils Act*
- KI – Potassium Iodide

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- LH – Lakeridge Health
- LTCH – Long-Term Care Homes
- MOH – Ontario Ministry of Health
- NFB – Nutritious Food Basket
- NORS – National Overdose Response Service
- OHD – Oral Health Division
- OPHS – *Ontario Public Health Standards: Requirements for Programs, Services, and Accountability*
- PCOP – Primary Care Outreach Program
- PHN – Public Health Nurses
- PSS – Personal Service Settings
- Q&D – Quality & Development
- RDPS – Region of Durham Paramedic Services
- RSV – Respiratory Syncytial Virus
- SDWS – Small Drinking Water Systems
- SHC – Sexual Health Clinics
- STBBI – Sexually Transmitted and Blood Borne Infections
- TAMI – Talking About Mental Illness
- TEO – Tobacco Enforcement Officers
- WHO – World Health Organization



Health Analytics, Research & Policy

Report for October – December 2024

Health Analytics Information Products

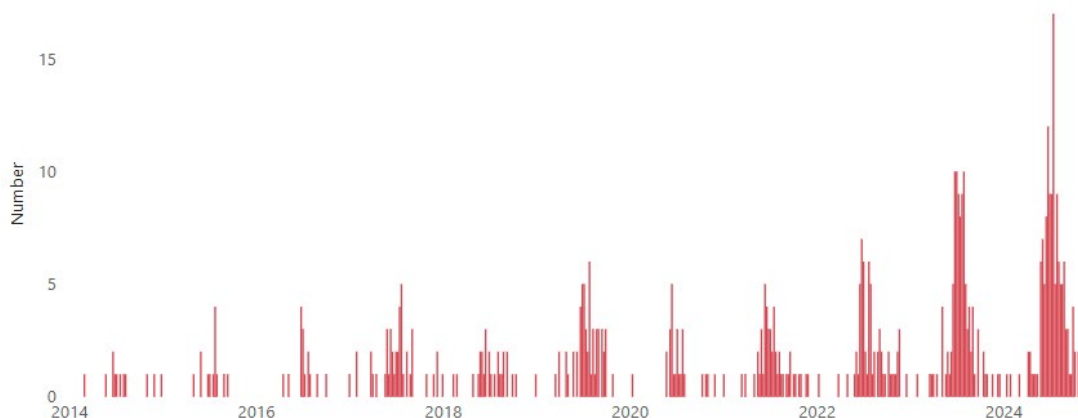
The Infectious Diseases Data Tracker is a new interactive dashboard for monitoring infectious DoPHS including diseases that are designated by the [HPPA](#) as reportable in Ontario.

The dashboard supports data-informed action on infectious diseases in Durham Region and replaces internal monthly infectious disease reports. Updated weekly, the dashboard provides more timely monitoring of information made possible by automation of the associated data processing and epidemiologic analysis. Additional improvements include the interactive features allowing more data to be presented with flexibility to meet the needs of infectious disease investigators.

Although this dashboard is for internal use only, it facilitates communication with HCP and will contribute to public reporting of relevant infectious disease trends. Key Durham Region trends are consistent with provincial trends:

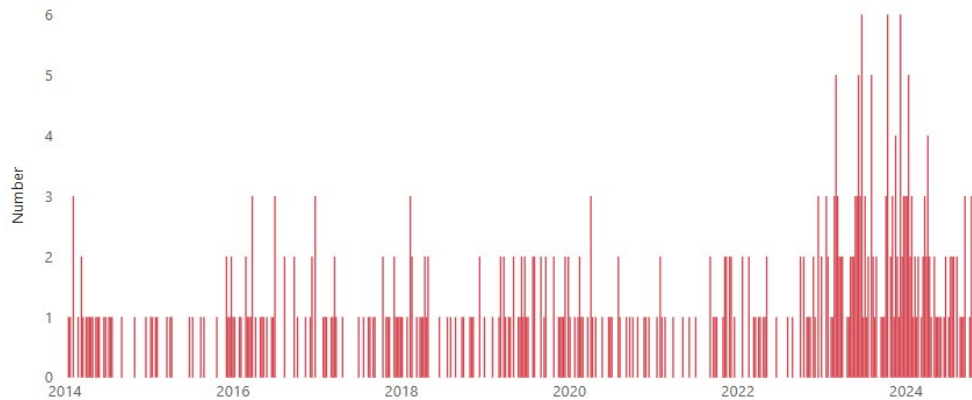
Lyme disease has increased since 2014, especially in the last two years.

Confirmed and Probable Lyme Diseases Cases in Durham Region



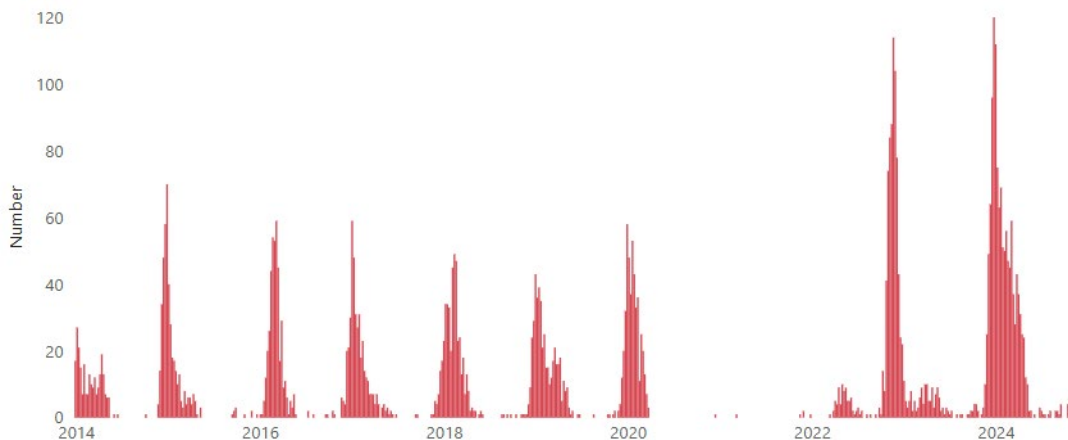
In 2023 and 2024, iGAS activity has increased.

Confirmed Invasive Group A Streptococcal (iGAS) Cases in Durham Region



Influenza activity was very low during pandemic years and has increased in 2023 and 2024.

Reported Influenza Cases in Durham Region



Health Policy & Equity

Health equity work supports DRHD staff by building capacity across all programs to apply a health equity lens to programs and approaches, establishing internal and external collaborative partnerships to advance health equity initiatives, supporting priority populations in cross-program initiatives, and developing departmental policies and processes intended to advance health equity.

The HPE team completed the following activities from October to December:

- Collaborated with DRSSD staff by attending **six** Mobile ID and Benefits Access Hubs across local municipalities, including Ajax, Clarington, Oshawa, Pickering, Port Perry,

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and Whitby. At the hub events, HPE staff provided residents with information and resources to support healthy families and healthy living.

- Hosted **two** virtual learning sessions in partnership with DRSSD, which was attended live or viewed as a recording afterwards by over **187** staff. The purpose of the sessions was to share information about organizations that support residents experiencing low income. Presenters included Feed the Need in Durham, Girls Inc., Mental Health Outreach Program, PCOP and the Regional Street Outreach Team.
- Continued working towards a capacity building strategy for staff to enhance a health equity approach to the planning, implementation, and evaluation of public health services, programs, and policies. This included working in partnership with the Health Analytics & Research Team on the development and analysis of a staff electronic survey. The purpose of the survey was to assess the baseline health equity knowledge of staff. The survey was open from June 27 to August 30, and **205** DRHD staff members completed the survey. HPE staff also developed a focus group plan to complement the survey and further assess staff learning needs through focus groups.

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

R.J. Kyle, BSc, MD, MHSc, CCFP, FRCPC, FACPM
Commissioner & Medical Officer of Health



Health Protection

Report for October – December 2024

Emergency Management

The [Emergency Management Guideline, 2024](#) highlights the importance of developing and conducting emergency exercises. These activities help staff stay prepared and ready to handle emergencies effectively. In accordance with the guideline, emergency notification testing for DRHD was successfully completed on November 26. This testing ensured the reliability and effectiveness of DRHD's emergency notification system. The results confirm that the systems are functioning as intended and ensures DRHD staff is ready to respond in an actual emergency. A total of **464** notifications were sent via text, phone call, and email to work and personal contacts through the Rave Notification System. Staff used the polling feature to confirm receipt of messages.

Potassium Iodide Tablet Program

Planning for the 2025 KI campaign is underway, starting in January. The first of three campaigns aims to encourage residents and businesses within 50 km of the Pickering or Darlington Nuclear Generating Stations to get their free KI tablets from preparetobesafe.ca. The January campaign will use displays at community centres and libraries to promote KI tablets, enhance residents' knowledge, and keep residents safe in the highly unlikely event of a nuclear accident. Anyone living or working within 50 km of Pickering or Darlington Nuclear Generating Stations can order their free supply of KI tablets from preparetobesafe.ca.

DRHD continues to pre-distribute KI tablets to institutions (CCC, hospitals, LTCH, schools, and youth detention centres) and first responders located within the DPZ (formerly known as the primary zone). The DPZ is a 10 km radius around each of the two nuclear generating stations.

Food Safety

Staff worked diligently on completing food safety inspections as per the [Food Safety Protocol, 2019](#) and were successful in achieving **100 per cent** completion of all

mandatory inspections for 2024. Between October to December, staff completed **609** high-risk inspections, **752** moderate-risk inspections, and **398** low-risk inspections. A total of **258** re-inspections were completed, and **41** inspections/re-inspections generated by complaints were completed. Staff did a tremendous amount of work to achieve these numbers and complete all mandatory inspections as required by the [OPHS](#).

Staff processed **60** new special events and farmers' market co-ordinator applications and had **139** new special event vendor applications during this quarter. Using the risk assessment tool and updated special events procedure, staff inspected **six** special events that were deemed higher risk.

Food safety continued to be a huge draw on HPD's DHCL, accounting for **2,198** inquiries out of **5,911** overall during 2024. Calls to DHCL have grown by **10 per cent** over the last five years and it is a great source of information for residents and community partners.

Healthy Environments

Climate Change and Health

As part of DRHD's mandate under the OPHS to conduct health vulnerability assessments related to climate change, DRHD completed its third report in a special series entitled, Climate Change and Health in Durham Region, available at durham.ca/ClimateAndHealth. This report titled, Assessing the Impact of Solar Ultraviolet Radiation explores the current and future health impacts of solar ultraviolet radiation with a special focus on health equity and prioritizing those who may be worst affected and least protected. The report will be released in February 2025.

In addition to finalizing this third report, DRHD completed a knowledge exchange and promotion campaign on the climate change and health series, with a special focus on key findings of the extreme heat vulnerability assessment. Presentations were made to a broad range of community partners and decision makers including Durham Region's department heads, Health & Social Services Committee, the Senior Climate Change Leadership Committee, Durham Nuclear Health Committee, Durham Region Indigenous Planning Table, the Durham Natural Environments Climate Change Collaborative, and DRHD's Research & Knowledge Exchange Speaker Series. DRHD also shared and promoted its new Heat Hacks resource for staying safe during extreme heat events at the Durham Climate Roundtable Fall Forum.

Cold Warning & Information System

HPD provides cold warning notification to community partners and the public during the cold season from November 15 to March 31.

A cold weather alert is declared when the temperature is expected to reach -15°C or less, and/or the windchill is expected to meet -20 or less, and/or an extreme winter weather event (e.g., an ice storm) is forecasted.

Since cold weather alert criteria are most often met overnight, HPD targets its response to community partners who provide vital services to at-risk populations by notifying them directly via email of the upcoming cold weather event. Notification of a cold weather event triggers community partners to mobilize cold response plans once criteria are met. Currently, HPD maintains a list of over 520 individuals, institutions, community service agencies and local businesses.

When cold alert criteria are met during the day, HPD will also issue social media posts and provide webpage updates to remind the public of ways to stay warm and stay safe during cold weather. Durham's cold warning notification system meets the requirements of the [Healthy Environments and Climate Change Guideline, 2018](#) under the OPHS.

Radon Action Month: Social Media Campaign

In Canada, radon is the number one cause of lung cancer in non-smokers, and the second leading cause of lung cancer, after smoking. November is Radon Action Month and it is the best time to begin testing a home for radon. In November 2024 and January 2025, HC mailed postcards to encourage radon testing in several targeted areas, including Durham Region.

To increase awareness of radon and promote radon testing, HPD launched its annual radon social media campaign to provide residents with information on radon, how to test for it, what to do if levels exceed HC guidelines, and where to find certified radon experts that can assist with testing and remediation. HPD also produced a Facts About, which provided additional resources for financial support for low-income homeowners and Tarion Warranty coverage for radon mitigation in new homes. Program information was disseminated to HCP. More information can be found at durham.ca/radon.

Part 8 Ontario *Building Code* (Sewage Systems)

From October to December, HPD conducted the following activities related to Part 8 of the Ontario *Building Code*. A total of **84** building permit applications for sewage systems were received. **Twelve** building addition applications were processed and **16** planning applications were reviewed. HPD's inspectors investigated **two** complaints related to private sewage systems. No Orders to Comply were issued this quarter.

A total of **309** inspections related to sewage system building permits and installations were conducted. HPD staff also attended pre-consultation meetings in each municipality regarding planning applications. From October to December, HPD staff attended or provided comments for **11** pre-consultation meetings. Staff also responded to questions from the public and sewage system installers regarding sewage systems and planning applications.

The 2024 Lake Simcoe Maintenance Inspection program was completed for the year with the last **four** outstanding inspections completed in Uxbridge in October.

Safe Water

Drinking Water

HPD now documents AWQI in HH5. This process follows information management policies, serving as the official record. It helps management report on AWQI and allows staff to quickly find, review, and address issues. Additionally, storing records in HH5 improves their integrity and security.

In October, the MOH requested additional information from HPD on a required survey to be completed on SDWS. This survey was completed and asked specific questions about DRHD's process for receiving calls on AWQI, on-call procedures, processes for responding to calls during after-hours and during business hours, communications with laboratories and Durham Region's SDWS operators, and the process for resolving or closing an AWQI report. HPD staff prioritized completing this request and provided the necessary information directly to the MOH by October 18, the required deadline. In addition, on December 17, the MOH requested that all local public health agencies complete a review of the new Draft Drinking Water Haulage Reference Document (formerly guidance document) on the MOH's SharePoint site. HPD staff completed this request and provided input on December 21.

HPD continues to promote access to free private well water testing in Ontario through boosted social media posts and its [website](#). HPD's messaging includes information on free well water testing, interpretation of sample results, and other related topics. In response to recent inquiries, HPD has strengthened its communication strategy to emphasize that this free service remains available to local residents. This service tests for indicator bacteria in well water and directs residents to a link where they can pick up and drop off water sample bottles. This information has been shared and amplified by other Durham Region departments and with the Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee and its members.

[O. Reg. 319/08: Small Drinking Water Systems](#) is enforced by HPD staff. SDWS are inspected based on a MOH risk assessment tool. Moderate and low risk systems are inspected at least once every four years, and high-risk systems are inspected every two years. Inspectors look for mandatory required water sampling and testing frequency, water treatment equipment and maintenance, operational checks, record keeping, physical well inspections and environmental examinations that may impact water quality, as well as operator knowledge and required training needed to operate SDWS safely. In 2024 HPD staff completed **77** inspections to ensure compliance with MOH requirements.

Recreational Water

In 2024, HPD focused on fulfilling all mandatory recreational water inspection targets as outlined by the [Recreational Water Protocol, 2019](#). From October to December, HPD conducted **102** routine recreational water inspections as required by the MOH. By the

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end of the year, HPD successfully met the MOH annual targets, conducting **537** routine inspections, addressing **25** complaints, and issuing **48** Section 13 Orders under the HPPA due to the presence of health hazards.

In December, the MOH announced an amendment to [R.R.O. 1990, Reg. 565: Public Pools](#), set to take effect on January 1, 2025. This amendment brings changes to the operation of public swimming pools, spas, modified pools, and wading pools. Moreover, the revised regulations introduce parameters and requirements for new types of recreational water facilities, including hot water pools, cold water pools, floatation pools, and floatation tanks.

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

Anthony Di Pietro
Director, Health Protection Division



Healthy Families

Report for October – December 2024

Durham Health Connection Line

DHCL provides access to public health information to the community. PHN provide assessment, health education, counselling, and referrals to community services for residents or those looking for local services. Inquiries are addressed on the telephone or through email.

From October to December, DHCL responded to **2,542** inquiries.

Healthy Babies Healthy Children

The HBHC program is a voluntary home visiting program to support families with identified risk factors from the prenatal period up until school entry. PHN and family visitors work in partnership with at-risk families to provide supportive intervention, and to identify and address goals to promote optimal child development and positive parenting.

This year, the HBHC implemented strategies to ensure information and referral to the program was readily accessible and seamless for Durham Region residents. In July, HBHC launched an online self-referral process to make it easier for Durham Region residents to access the program. Families are now able to submit an online self-referral to the HBHC program. From October to December, the program has received **92** self-referrals for a total of **147** self-referrals for the year. Additionally, in October, a new “HBHC postcard” was developed. The postcard contains a QR code linking clients to the HBHC webpage and to other child health and parenting information. This postcard is being used by community partners, including local hospitals to promote the HBHC program.

Healthy Families

Breastfeeding Clinics

Breastfeeding is the optimal method of infant feeding, recommended by major health organizations like the WHO and UNICEF. It provides essential nutrients and protection against diseases for infants, while also benefiting maternal health.

Infants benefit as breast milk is the most complete and balanced source of nutrition, containing proteins, fats, vitamins, and antibodies. Long-term health outcomes of breastfeeding include a reduced likelihood of developing chronic diseases later in life for the breastfeeding parent and infant. The breastfeeding parent can also see improvement in their emotional well-being, positive attachment, and connection with their infant.

While breast milk is natural, the art of breastfeeding is a skill that both parent and baby need to learn. At times, barriers occur that can impact the success and long-term outcomes of breastfeeding. DRHD offers breastfeeding support at **two** clinic locations: one in Port Perry and one at the Oshawa Centre. From October to December, PHN provided **350** breastfeeding appointments to clients in the clinic and **187** breastfeeding appointments in the home. In the 2024 calendar year, **1,432** appointments were provided in clinic and **720** appointments in clients' homes.

Perinatal Mental Health

Postpartum mental illness affects as many as one in four mothers nationwide. Of local residents who gave birth in 2021, 22 per cent reported at least one mental health concern during pregnancy. Between 2013 and 2021, there has been a 7.6 per cent increase in residents reporting maternal mental health concerns during pregnancy.

Maternal depression is considered an Adverse Childhood Experience, with known impacts on childhood development. Improving access to perinatal mental health services for families can improve both parent and child outcomes and supports the growth and development of children at an early stage by minimizing their experience of adversity.

From October to December, PHN in Healthy Families implemented **two** series of a Cognitive Behavioural Therapy program called Steps to Wellness: Before and After Baby, serving **14** clients. In 2024, **six** series were held, serving **53** clients. Of the clients that were evaluated post-group for the October to December period, **100 per cent** experienced a reduction in their depression scores on the EPDS, compared to their scores prior to participation in the group. For all groups held in 2024, **76 per cent** of clients experienced a reduction in their EPDS scores following the group. As part of anonymous post-series feedback, clients reported that they felt better able to apply skills learned in the program to modify their behaviour.

Supporting Healthy Growth and Development

The COVID-19 pandemic had a profound negative impact on children's mental health and wellbeing. It is important for parents/caregivers to model positive ways of coping with stress and other setbacks, so their child can learn to not only survive but thrive.

Parents' and caregivers' emotional regulation and mental health is highly correlated with their child's mental health and stress. Promoting positive mental health and wellbeing is an important way to support children, as well as their parents and/or caregivers.

Healthy Families used results from a 2023 situational assessment about effective parenting strategies for a DRHD social media campaign called Empowered Parents Empower Kids, and a resource series called Connecting with your Child. DRHD's campaign ran from September 4 to 27 on Facebook, Instagram and X. It contained messaging on how parents can positively connect with and support their child, pre-teen, young teen, or teenager's development. Each week the campaign shared messaging focused on parenting strategies for a particular age group.

The campaign involved **12** social media posts. Many of the posts during the campaign potentially reached over **15,400** residents in the target population. Engagement with the posts were between **one to three per cent**, with posts from a total of **441** users. This level of engagement is considered average to above average performance.

Infant & Child Development

The ICD program is a voluntary service that partners with families to promote the healthy growth and development of children from birth to school entry who have a developmental concern. Durham residents can self-refer to the program or be referred by a service provider. ICD consultants partner with families to plan developmental goals and establish ways to achieve these goals within the child's routines using a family-centered, strengths-based approach. Early intervention and occupational therapy consultation services may include:

- Home visiting to provide modeling and parent coaching.
- Support with transition to early learning and care and/or kindergarten.
- Formal and informal assessments.
- Connecting families to community programs and services.
- Family education.

From October to December, the ICD program offered services to approximately **459** children and provided approximately **980** appointments to support modeling, parent coaching, and family education.

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by
Kavine Thangaraj
Director, Population Health Division
Chief Nursing Officer



Healthy Living

Report for October – December 2024

Healthy Living

Alcohol

Alcohol is the most widely used substance in Ontario. The [2023 Annual Report](#) of the Chief Medical Officer of Health of Ontario identifies the rise in substance use and related harms as a significant challenge for public health, threatening the health of Ontarians and the well-being of communities.

Alcohol is a leading cause of preventable death in Ontario and a significant cause of serious health harms. In an average year in Ontario, about **4,330** deaths, **22,009** hospitalizations, and **195,693** ED visits among people aged 15 and older can be attributed to alcohol use. Most alcohol-attributable deaths in Ontario are from cancers (e.g., breast, colon, throat, mouth, larynx, esophagus, and liver), most hospitalizations are for neuro-psychiatric conditions (e.g., alcohol withdrawal, amnesic syndrome, and other mental and behavioural disorders), and most ED visits are for unintentional injuries such as falls or alcohol poisoning. Even a small amount of alcohol per week (i.e., more than **two** standard drinks) can be damaging to health. As well, the risk of alcohol-related harm increases with how frequently people drink and the amount they drink at one time.

In addition, alcohol is frequently associated with violent and aggressive behaviour, including intimate partner violence, male-to-female sexual violence, and other forms of aggression and violence between adults. Alcohol plays a significant role in injuries and accidental deaths, including those that occur when people are driving under the influence. Economically, alcohol and its related harms cost Ontario **\$7.1 billion** in 2020 – significantly more than other substance use including tobacco (**\$4.1 billion**) and opioids (**\$2.7 billion**).

In October, DRHD launched an awareness campaign to promote [Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health](#) and amplify key messages from [Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction](#). The campaign entitled Drink Less, Live More aimed to encourage

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Durham Region residents to reflect on their alcohol use. Campaign materials refer residents to durham.ca/alcohol for updated information on the health and social risks associated with alcohol use as well as strategies to reduce personal use. During the campaign period, there were **1,209** page views on durham.ca/alcohol, a **1,215 per cent** increase from the same time period the previous month.

Amidst the Ontario government's [expansion of alcohol sales](#) to big box stores, grocery stores, convenience stores, and other retail outlets, the campaign seeks to counterbalance the increased accessibility of alcohol with messages of moderation. The awareness campaign encourages local residents to be mindful of, and perhaps reframe their drinking habits.

To ensure a wide reach, campaign messages were promoted across the region during the months of October and November as follows:

- **Six** social media posts resulting in **196,504** impressions, **93,258** reach and **4,327** engagements.
- Digital advertisements throughout the Oshawa and Pickering Town Centres.
- **11** gas station and billboard advertisements located in Clarington, Newcastle, Oshawa, Pickering, Port Perry and Whitby.
- **100** interior advertisements in Durham Region Transit buses.
- **Three** bus shelter advertisements in Ajax, Clarington and Whitby.
- **Two** billboards at the Oshawa and Pickering GO Stations.
- **Two** ice rink advertisements in Oshawa and Port Perry.
- **Two** digital advertisements at Landmark Cinema in Whitby.

DRHD also recognizes the importance of prevention efforts targeted toward youth to delay the age of initiation and reduce teen patterns of use. Accordingly, throughout the fall staff continued to work with local school boards and schools to provide evidence-based [curriculum support tools and youth engagement strategies](#) related to alcohol use prevention.

Cannabis

DRHD has continued to promote a public health approach to cannabis following the legalization of cannabis in 2018. This is done through ongoing collaboration with community partners and providing the community with the most current, evidence-based information regarding the risks of cannabis use and harm reduction strategies.

According to the Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System (2022), young adults are among the highest age group who use cannabis. In response to these findings, DRHD has had regular meetings with **two** post-secondary schools (Ontario Tech University and Durham College) to assess needs, discuss collaboration ideas, share supports for students, as well as build capacity of the Peer Wellness Educators. As a result, DRHD supported **two** student outreach events in campus residence in fall 2024, reaching approximately **60** students.

DRHD also ran an online harm reduction campaign for six weeks from October to November called Mindful Consumption. The campaign sought to increase the public's awareness of the potential risks when consuming cannabis edibles. Campaign metrics indicate that **393,362** people saw the campaign messages through online ads and **524** individuals engaged with the ads. Lastly, over the course of the campaign, the web traffic for durham.ca/cannabis increased by **78 per cent**.

Mental Health Promotion

Mental health promotion is the process of enhancing the capacity of individuals and communities to increase control over their lives and improve their mental health ([Mental Health Promotion Guideline, 2018](#)). Mental health plays a significant role in school communities, contributing to everyday wellness and enhancing student mental health literacy and leadership. Data from the 2023 Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey included in the [Mental Health and Well-Being of Ontario Students](#) report indicated that **38 per cent** of Durham students in Grades 7 to 12 rate their mental health as fair or poor.

DRHD is a member of the TAMI Coalition which provides a forum for community partners to develop and deliver mental health education to Durham elementary and secondary students. This partnership includes collaboration with **11** partners from a variety of sectors including education, health, community-based mental health and addictions services, child protection and children's mental health services.

Each year, TAMI hosts summits where students learn about mental health and wellness, mental health promotion, and stigma. PHN attend the annual summit to assist their assigned school with developing an action plan of health promotion initiatives to implement throughout the school year.

From October to December, a total of **24** elementary schools and **16** secondary schools participated in the summits and approximately **200** students and educators from **three** school boards attended. An evaluation is scheduled for spring 2025, where schools will share their successes, learnings and celebrate their achievements.

To address opioid related overdoses in Durham Region, DRHD staff continues to partner with **40** community agencies, service providers, community members and people with lived experience on the Durham Region Opioid Task Force. DRHD on-boarded **six** new agencies to the task force in 2024. In 2024, the task force held **six** meetings to review local treatment services, assessment tools, Indigenous health, and the client experience. These discussions assisted community agencies to collaborate and leverage existing services locally.

Nutritious Food Basket

Food insecurity is a significant public health issue impacting many Durham residents. Household food insecurity is defined as "inadequate or insecure access to food due to financial constraints". People who are food insecure are much more likely than others to

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experience increased rates of chronic disease and mental health problems such as hypertension, diabetes, heart disease, and mood and anxiety disorders.

Monitoring food affordability is one of the most meaningful tools available to raise awareness about the cost of healthy eating and assess the adequacy of social assistance and minimum wage rate. Monitoring food affordability supports DRHD and community planning to address food insecurity locally.

Food affordability is monitored by surveying the cost of nutritious foods from local grocery stores using the provincial [Monitoring Food Affordability Reference Document, 2018](#). The NFB contains a variety of foods that are consistent with [Canada's Food Guide](#) and are commonly consumed by Canadians including, fruit, vegetables, protein, and whole grains.

Food data were collected and calculated for approximately **61** foods that represent a nutritious diet for individuals in various age and gender groups, from **nine** grocery retailers located throughout Durham Region. Results determined the cost of the 2024 Durham Region NFB for a family of four (two adults aged 31 to 50, a boy aged 14 and a girl aged eight) was **\$284.50** per week or **\$1,231.88** per month - including an additional five per cent added to the food basket cost to cover miscellaneous foods used in meal preparation such as condiments, coffee, etc.

DRHD implemented a NFB awareness campaign in November and December to promote the most recent NFB data. This included revisions to DRHD's new food insecurity web page at durham.ca/foodpoverty, which promotes important public information on food insecurity, including downloadable access to spreadsheets, a variety of income scenarios, infographics, relevant weblinks and helpful information. This information can also be readily used by community partners to support their advocacy work. Additionally, the website was promoted through Ontario Works cheque inserts in collaboration with DRSSD, reaching more than **10,500** Durham Region residents living with low-income. A food insecurity promotion campaign was implemented to promote the new website, and ran on DRHD's Facebook, Instagram, and X accounts.

Opioids

DRHD routinely monitors opioid-related data and information to better understand the impact of opioid-related poisonings at the local level. Data are uploaded weekly into an interactive dashboard called the [Durham Region Opioid Information System](#). Currently, there are **75** webpage subscribers and from January to December, there were **2,312** page views. Data show that from January to December, RDPS received **739** calls related to suspected opioid overdoses.

DRHD administers the Opioid Overdose Early Warning and Surveillance System, which includes monitoring the RDPS response calls related to suspected opioid overdoses, suspected overdose ED visits based on registration and triage data, suspected drug-related death data from the Office of the Chief Coroner of Ontario, and data shared from

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local community partners about current trends. Data are monitored weekly and when an alert is triggered, DRHD completes a situational analysis and if warranted, issues a drug alert. Currently there are over **30** community agencies that receive the drug alerts. Throughout 2024, **seven** drug alerts were issued.

In fall 2024, DRHD conducted an evaluation of the Opioid Overdose Early Warning and Surveillance System to assess the impact of this service, confirm the service is meeting the needs of the community partners and identify opportunities for improvements. The survey was sent to **91** alert recipients from over **30** organizations and service agencies. From the **26** survey responses received, results indicated that the early warning system is an effective tool to share timely and relevant information with clients and colleagues related to the local toxic drug supply.

Evaluation results of the early warning system indicated:

- **96 per cent** of survey respondents agree or strongly agree that the information in the alert is relevant to their work.
- **100 per cent** agree or strongly agree that the information in the drug alert is important to share with people accessing their services.
- **100 per cent** agree or strongly agree that the information in the drug alert is important to share with their colleagues.
- **92 per cent** agree or strongly agree that the information is received in a timely manner.
- After receiving the alert, respondents acted by sharing the information with colleagues (**92 per cent**), shared the information with people who use drugs (**62 per cent**), and/or indicated that they took other actions (e.g., reminding clients about harm reduction supports, ensuring that naloxone kits are fully stocked, and ensuring staff is updated and prepared) (**12 per cent**).
- Respondents who indicated they shared alert information with people accessing services did so mainly by email (**69 per cent**); in person appointments (**56 per cent**); or through outreach services/workers (**56 per cent**).
- **81 per cent** indicated that the alerts correspond with what they are encountering in the community.
- **96 per cent** of respondents indicated that the alerts contain just the right amount of information.

Naloxone is a life-saving medication that can reverse the effects of an opioid overdose when given in a timely manner. Through the [Ontario Naloxone Program](#), public health is required to provide eligible organizations with naloxone kits to distribute to their clients at risk of opioid overdose and to their family and/or friends. DRHD continues to act as a central distributor for naloxone in Durham Region. In 2024, DRHD distributed **4,930** naloxone kits, **902** naloxone refills and onboarded **four** new eligible organizations.

The [NORS](#) is a peer-run, peer-led, overdose prevention hotline, funded by a contribution from HC. Confidential support is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Individuals can call or text from anywhere in Canada before using substances. As a harm reduction strategy, DRHD began promoting NORS in

October. From October to December, **3,795** promotional resources were provided to community agencies that service people who use drugs. NORS was also promoted within naloxone kits. An evaluation of the promotional materials was conducted in November with agency staff. Evaluation results indicated that:

- **75 per cent** of respondents' clients were not aware of NORS prior to the interaction.
- **100 per cent** of respondents indicated they promoted NORS with clients using the promotional items they received and felt that DRHD should continue to produce these promotional items.
- **100 per cent** of respondents indicated they agreed or strongly agreed that the NORS information was relevant to their clients.
- **75 per cent** of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the clients they spoke with were interested in the NORS service.
- **75 per cent** of respondents indicated that clients reported they planned to use the NORS service.

To further promote NORS, a FAX About was sent to family physicians, nurse practitioners, community and mental HCP, walk-in clinics, and local ED.

Oral Health

For October to December, OHD noted the following achievements, demonstrating a commitment to improving oral health outcomes and delivering exceptional services to the community.

Comprehensive Dental Services: OHD served over **1,060** unique clients. The DRHD Dental Clinic provided services to **175** Healthy Smiles Ontario clients and **890** Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program clients through **2,381** appointments. Delivery of dental care services in Durham Region's four LTCH is on hold at this time, but it is anticipated that this will resume in early 2025. The Brock Community Health Centre project has been postponed until spring 2025, but preparations have been started with various partners.

Dental Benefits Claims: OHD processed **908** dental benefit claims between October and December, amounting to **\$245,283** in fees paid. These efforts facilitate the smooth provision of dental care and ensure financial support for those in need.

Dental Estimates: OHD received **479** estimates and identified **293** that were eligible to be processed for approval.

Dental Care Needs: OHD identified **2,196** children with urgent dental needs and **2,334** children with non-urgent dental needs.

Denture Lab: Denturists delivered over **390** services in the Dental Clinic's denture lab.

Oral Health Education and Promotion: Staff provided dental screening to **266** children and oral health education to over **1,800** children.

School Screening: OHD screened **10,250** students and identified **692** children with urgent dental needs and **989** children with non-urgent dental needs.

Social Media Engagement: To reach a wider audience, OHD effectively utilized social media platforms to promote oral health information and program updates. OHD reached **66,555** individuals, achieved **82,715** impressions, and **1,604** engagements on Facebook, Instagram, and X.

These accomplishments reflect OHD's dedication to improving oral health outcomes and its commitment to education and collaboration. By leveraging resources effectively, DRHD continues to make a positive impact on the oral health of residents.

Smoke-Free Ontario Act, 2017

TEO completed all required inspections and investigations for 2024 as mandated by the OPHS. TEO are required to conduct inspections at all tobacco and vapour product retailers. Their inspections include display and promotion inspections, as well as youth access test shops conducted by students under the age of 19 who attempt to purchase tobacco or vapour products. If a vendor sells tobacco or vapour products to a minor, the operator and owner of the store may be charged with selling or supplying tobacco or vapour products to a person who is under 19 years old. Two or more tobacco-related convictions may lead to an automatic prohibition, issued by the MOH, prohibiting the vendor from selling tobacco products for a minimum of six months. TEO also completed the required secondary school inspections and all display and promotion inspections for all tobacco and vapour product retailers.

TEO respond to all complaints received with respect to smoking and vaping in all enclosed workplaces and other prohibited areas that are included in the [Smoke Free Ontario Act, 2017](#) or the [Durham Region Smoking and Vaping By-law #28-2019](#). These areas include multi-unit dwellings, schools, hospitals, outdoor recreation playground areas, hookah lounges, etc.

From October 1 to December 31, TEO conducted **three** youth access test shop inspections for vapour products and **17** display and promotion inspections at vapour product retailers. TEO continue to observe non-compliance with stores selling products with high levels of nicotine and flavours. These investigations require different enforcement strategies due to the seriousness of non-compliance observed. In response, TEO have conducted evening youth access test shop and display and promotion inspections which has resulted in legal activity and successful outcomes in court. At one retail establishment, fines related to sales of vapour products to minors exceeded \$10,000.

TEO conducted **three** youth access test shop inspections for tobacco products and **20** compliance inspections for display and promotion for tobacco retailers. In total, **one** charge was issued for tobacco related offences.

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TEO conducted **140** inspections in enclosed workplaces and other prohibited areas and **five** charges were issued for non-compliance.

TEO continue to respond to complaints regarding students vaping on school property. From October to December, TEO investigated **29** complaints, issued **eight** warning letters, and served **two** charges to a student vaping on school property.

The Smoke Free Enforcement Coordinator and the TEO are collaborating with both the Durham District School Board and the Durham Catholic District School Board, along with internal DRHD colleagues, to support the implementation of [Policy/Program Memorandum \(PPM\) 128](#). This policy focuses on student health as it relates to electronic cigarettes, recreational cannabis, and tobacco in schools. Joint visits were conducted to provide information and support to secondary schools in Durham Region. Additionally, an electronic form is being created and will soon be available to secondary schools to report students smoking or vaping on school property to improve efficiency.

Specialty vape stores and tobacconist stores continue to operate in Durham Region. As of December 31, there are **68** registered specialty vape stores and **four** tobacconist stores.

The Smoking and Vaping By-law #28-2019 has been in effect since June 24, 2019, and TEO continue to enforce the by-law within prohibited facilities.

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

Anthony Di Pietro
Director, Health Protection Division

Original signed by

Maryam Pezeshki
Director, Oral Health Division

Original signed by

Kavine Thangaraj
Director, Population Health Division
Chief Nursing Officer



Infectious Diseases

Report for October – December 2024

Immunization

In accordance with the OPHS, DRHD promotes and provides provincially funded immunization programs and services to eligible persons, including underserved and priority populations, to reduce or eliminate the burden of vaccine preventable diseases.

Adverse Events Following Immunization

AEFI are defined as any untoward medical occurrences that follows immunization and do not necessarily have a causal relationship with the vaccine. DRHD is responsible to monitor, investigate, and document all suspected cases of AEFI that meet provincial reporting criteria, and to promote reporting by HCP throughout Durham Region. Following AEFI investigations, individualized vaccine recommendations are provided to HCP and clients. In 2024, **136** AEFI were investigated. These investigations and recommendations promote vaccine confidence and the continuation of immunizations.

COVID-19 Vaccines

From October to December, **234** COVID-19 vaccine doses were administered through DRHD immunization clinics and the homebound program to Durham Region residents with limited access to pharmacies and HCP. A total of **809** COVID-19 vaccine doses were administered in 2024.

School-Based Vaccine Clinics

DRHD is required to enforce the [ISPA](#) and assess the immunization status of students attending schools in Durham Region. The purpose of ISPA is to increase protection of students attending public and private schools in Ontario against the following diseases: diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio, measles, mumps, rubella, meningococcal, and varicella. Parents/guardians are required to follow the provincial [Publicly Funded Immunization Schedule](#) to ensure their children are up to date on immunizations. If

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students are unable to be immunized or parents/guardians choose to exempt their children from required immunizations, a medical exemption or statement of conscience or religious belief must be filed with DRHD.

PHN attended **190** schools twice during the 2023/2024 school year to provide immunizations. In addition, catch-up doses were offered to Grade 8 students unable to complete their vaccine series in Grade 7. Hepatitis B (two dose series), HPV9 (two dose series) and meningococcal-C-ACYW-135 (one dose series) vaccines remain an effective strategy for reducing the incidence of diseases. A total of **28,612** vaccines were administered to eligible Grade 7 students and **4,180** vaccines were administered to eligible Grade 8 students.

A total of **9,869** hepatitis B vaccine doses were administered to eligible Grade 7 students and as a result **60 per cent** were fully immunized. An additional **1,612** hepatitis B vaccine doses were administered to Grade 8 students. By the end of the 2023/2024 school year, **76 per cent** of Grade 8 students completed their vaccine series.

A total of **7,523** doses of meningococcal-C-ACYW-135 vaccines were administered to eligible Grade 7 students and as a result, **80 per cent** of eligible Grade 7 students were fully immunized. An additional **645** doses were administered to Grade 8 students. By the end of the 2023/2024 school year, **88 per cent** of Grade 8 students were fully immunized.

A total of **11,220** doses of HPV9 vaccines were administered to eligible Grade 7 students and as a result, **51 per cent** of eligible Grade 7 students were fully immunized. An additional **1,923** HPV9 vaccine doses were administered to eligible Grade 8 students. By the end of the 2023/2024 school year, **71 per cent** of Grade 8 students completed their vaccine series.

Vaccine Storage and Handling

DRHD managed the vaccine storage and handling for all publicly funded vaccine in Durham Region. In 2024, PHN inspected **480** vaccine fridges storing publicly funded vaccine and ensured all sites upheld vaccine storage and handling requirements as per the MOH. PHN provided education to HCP who administer publicly funded vaccine on waste and cold chain incident reduction strategies. To ensure vaccine provided to local residents remains safe and effective, PHN followed up on **12** cold chain incidents from October to December, for a total of **56** cold chain incidents in 2024. PHN responded to **four** after-hours fridge alarms for DRHD vaccine fridges, and a total of **six** after-hours alarms for the 2024 year. DRHD distributed **312,337** doses of publicly funded vaccine from October to December to HCP for administration to residents, and a total of **313,783** doses were distributed in 2024.

In fall 2024, DRHD supported the distribution, storage, and handling of publicly funded influenza vaccines for individuals six months of age and older, distributing **59,231** doses of influenza vaccine, with a total of **60,486** doses administered in 2024. For the fall COVID-19 campaign, DRHD distributed and supported inventory management for **6,727**

doses, with a total of **9,487** doses in 2024. Additionally, the Infant and High-Risk Children RSV Prevention Program was implemented, which included the distribution of two new RSV products to help prevent RSV infections in infants. The Older Adult High-Risk RSV Prevention Program continued to develop with expanded eligibility and a new RSV vaccine. DRHD distributed **6,914** doses of RSV vaccine to HCP, with a total of **8,386** doses distributed in 2024.

Influenza, COVID-19, and RSV vaccine administration is available through primary HCP, community health centres, hospitals, LTCH and retirement homes. Influenza and COVID-19 vaccine administration is also available at local pharmacies.

DRHD supports individuals experiencing difficulty accessing publicly funded vaccines, including fall respiratory vaccines. To increase knowledge about influenza, COVID-19, and RSV vaccines, and promote vaccine uptake within Durham Region, staff created a social media campaign that ran throughout the season and reached over **193,734** Durham Region residents. Additionally, a [news release](#) was distributed to promote the influenza and COVID-19 vaccine to increase vaccine uptake.

Infectious Diseases Prevention & Control

Animal Diseases

One chipmunk tested positive for *Echinococcus multilocularis* in November. Continued education to local physicians and veterinarians occurred in October and November regarding animal diseases that could affect humans, including avian influenza, which was identified in a British Columbia teen in November. Neither avian influenza nor avian chlamydia were identified in Durham Region between October to December.

Child Care Centres

Between October to December, a total of **306** inspections were completed in CCC. Staff completed **109** CCC environmental inspections and **197** CCC kitchen inspections. All mandatory inspection requirements were completed as per the [Infection Prevention and Control Protocol, 2019](#) and [Food Safety Protocol, 2019](#) of the OPHS.

The Wee Care newsletter 2024 fall/winter edition was sent to CCC operators in mid-October with information focusing on outbreak reporting and illness management resources.

A survey was launched to CCC regarding staff knowledge of the CCC IPAC online learning course. The survey is still open for CCC operators and staff to respond. From the survey results, the CCC IPAC course will be updated with the addition of pretest questions to further evaluate the knowledge gained and the effectiveness of the course.

Diseases of Public Health Significance

In accordance with the OPHS and [O. Reg. 135/18: Designation of Diseases](#), HPD is responsible for the management of cases and contacts of DoPHS.

From October to December, **294** DoPHS were reported to HPD. These include in descending order: influenza A (**159**), Lyme disease (**33**), campylobacter (**25**), salmonellosis (**25**), carbapenemase-producing enterobacteriaceae (**12**), giardiasis (**10**), cryptosporidiosis (**four**), shigellosis (**four**), yersiniosis (**four**), anaplasmosis (**three**), influenza B (**three**), legionella (**two**), amebiasis (**two**), listeriosis (**two**), verotoxin-producing *E. coli* (**two**), blastomycosis (**one**), cyclosporiasis (**one**), paratyphoid fever (**one**), typhoid fever (**one**), and **zero** cases for all other DoPHS not mentioned above.

Infection Prevention and Control Education and Lapses

Continued education in IPAC occurred from October to December. An IPAC Education Day was held on October 9 to educate the IPAC leads of LTCH, retirement homes, acute care facilities, and other congregate living settings. This was a joint venture with HPD and the Durham IPAC Hub. Also, Infection Control Week (October 14 to 18) was acknowledged with a display at Durham Region headquarters as well as on social media. Global Handwashing Day (October 15) and World Antimicrobial Awareness Week (November 18 to 22) were also promoted with social media campaigns. High skills major courses offered by some high schools have once again requested IPAC education to their students and **one** session was delivered in December.

There were **13** IPAC lapse investigations. Of those investigations, **six** were confirmed IPAC lapses and posted, with **five** for PSS and **one** for health facilities. In addition, all DRHD clinics have been audited with minor or no IPAC issues.

Outbreak Summary

Outbreaks are investigated in accordance with the OPHS. From October to December, **120** outbreak investigations were conducted; **55** of these were COVID-19 (**19** LTCH, **26** retirement homes, **10** hospitals). The other **65** outbreaks were respiratory (**43**) and enteric (**22**). The number of respiratory outbreaks by type of facility is: **34** LTCH, **four** in hospitals, **two** in retirement homes, and **one** in a correctional facility. The number of enteric outbreaks by type of facility is: **13** enteric in CCC, **four** retirement homes, **three** shelters and **two** LTCH. Some confirmed causative agents identified included: coronavirus (non-COVID-19), enterovirus, influenza A, metapneumovirus, norovirus, parainfluenza, rhinovirus, rotavirus, and RSV. Seventeen outbreak audits were completed by public health inspectors with support from the Durham IPAC hub.

Personal Service Settings

Between October to December, **247** inspections were completed in PSS. All mandatory inspection requirements were completed as per the [Infection Prevention and Control Protocol, 2019](#), of the OPHS.

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For PSS inspections, common infractions included improper cleaning, disinfection and/or sterilization of re-usable items, not preparing and using the approved disinfectants appropriately, using work contact surfaces that are not easily cleanable, and premises not maintained in a clean and sanitary condition. Unapproved devices and new services being offered continue to involve more staff resources. DRHD issued **two** charges for violations of [O. Reg. 136/18: Personal Service Settings](#). Staff issued **two** Section 13 Orders for unapproved devices found at the facility.

A large Tattoo & Piercing Expo occurred at the Pickering Casino Resort from October 25 to 27. The Tattoo & Piercing Expo traveled to multiple municipalities from May to October, with Durham Region being the last stop on the tour. The special event was attended by DRHD and there were **59** PSS vendors offering tattoos and piercings. DRHD inspected all the tattoo and piercing vendors on the first day of the event and identified minimal issues. DRHD will be in contact in the future with the event coordinator to discuss any concerns prior to their next tour in 2025.

Rabies Prevention and Control

From October to December, DRHD investigated **399** animal bite reports which is an increase from 359 reports investigated for the same time period in 2023. During this time, DRHD provided **56** local residents with anti-rabies treatment, an increase from 42 for this period in 2023. DRHD submitted **seven** animals involved in human exposures for testing and **zero** were positive for rabies.

One charge was issued to animal owners for failing to immunize their pet against rabies, pursuant to the [R.R.O. 1990, Reg. 567: Rabies Immunization](#).

Sexual Health

DRHD SHC in Oshawa and Pickering provide virtual and in-person support to clients with a focus on STBBI testing and treatment, health education and counselling related to sexual health practices and high-risk vaccinations.

A SHC evaluation was conducted which has been instrumental in assessing what clients learned, anticipated behaviour change, outcomes, and effectiveness of interventions provided at clinics. Evaluation data collected between January 2023 to October 2024 demonstrated the following impact to clients who received SHC services:

- **96 per cent** felt more confident in making sexual health decisions.
- **95 per cent** are considering changes to lower their risk of STBBI.
- **93 per cent** found the health education from nurses helpful.
- **90 per cent** learned new information about their sexual health from nurses.

The positive outcomes of this evaluation demonstrate the importance of DRHD SHC in providing inclusive, non-judgemental, safe, and confidential services to Durham residents.

Vector-Borne Diseases

The vector-borne diseases season has ended and DRHD is working with Corporate Services – Information Technology colleagues to build a new and more efficient system to track mosquito surveillance data. The new system is expected to be online by May 2025.

Also, online complaint submission forms have been created for the public to report areas of stagnant water, backyard catch basin treatment requests and for municipal by-law officers to refer any complaints to DRHD for escalated follow-up with Section 13 Orders. These will be activated at the start of the 2025 season.

World AIDS Day

DRHD recognized World AIDS Day on December 1, 2024. The day focuses on spreading awareness about HIV/AIDS and shows support for people living with HIV/AIDS. World AIDS Day also provided an opportunity to highlight DRHD's role in reducing the transmission of STBBI through timely case and contact follow-up as well as testing and treatment services at DRHD SHC.

A FAX About for World AIDS Day was sent to local HCP on November 29, which highlighted:

- The *“Take the rights path: My health, my right!”* theme identified by WHO for 2024
- Current statistics of HIV infections in Durham Region
- Providing HCP with resources on testing and treatment of STBBIs.

DRHD continues to manage elevated levels of HIV infections. From January – December, **63** HIV infections were managed (compared to **50** for the same time period in 2023).

Respectfully submitted,
Original signed by

Kavine Thangaraj
Director, Population Health Division
Chief Nursing Officer

Original signed by

Anthony Di Pietro
Director, Health Protection Division



Report for October – December 2024

Community Paramedicine

RDPS launched the LTCH+ pilot project, which aims to bring diagnostic testing to select LTCH. As part of the pilot, RDPS completed the first diagnostic testing case study in October. From October to December, RDPS onboarded **two** LTCH, (Orchard Villa and Fairview Lodge) into the program. RDPS is now working with **six** LTCH with point of care bloodwork, ultrasound, and urinalysis to avoid unnecessary patient transports to the ED for diagnostic testing.

RDPS's northern CP team began spirometry training to enable in-home patient testing six to eight weeks after exacerbation. Spirometry testing will support medication adjustments if required in partnership with LH's chronic obstructive pulmonary disease virtual clinic.

RDPS's CP team hosted **nine** CP@clinics at various locations, including 155 King St., and 1880 and 1890 Valley Farm Rd. The CP team also supported homebound COVID-19 and influenza vaccinations.

Each quarter, RDPS is adding approximately **200** new clients to the CP program.

PCOP completed the following activities from October to December:

- Performed wound care in the PCOP ambulance, which served as a safe, sterile, and warm space to perform medical care for the unsheltered population during the colder months.
- Held **six** mobile clinics at Christian Faith Outreach Centre and 1635 Dundas St. shelters to help support medical and social needs.
- Expanded the PCOP team's wound care expertise by completing additional education with a national wound care nurse who rode with the PCOP team members to see the challenging wounds they care for in the community. RDPS is looking forward to future educational opportunities for advancing wound care.
- Completed multiple withdrawal management supports with the administration of Suboxone.
- Toured the new Beaverton Heights transitional housing property.

Logistics

Five new command vehicles (Ford Explorers) have been ordered to supplement the command fleet, including replacements of aging vehicles. These are hybrid units which will align with Durham Region's green fleet goals of reducing emissions. The vehicles are expected to be delivered in June 2025 and will be upfitted thereafter.

Demers Ambulances continue to deliver new ambulances from the 2023 capital purchase. **Five** were delivered in the fourth quarter of 2024. The ambulances are being prepared for commissioning and will be used to replace existing vehicles in the aging fleet.

The hiring process for **two** Logistics staff members, is currently ongoing. The addition of these staff members will help bolster RDPS resources and allow continued enhancements of the services provided by the Logistics team moving forward.

The new Seaton Paramedic Station is expected to be substantially completed by April or May 2025.

Operations

RDPS continued collaborating with Scarborough Health Network - Centenary Site to ensure a seamless transfer of patients identified with ST-elevation myocardial infarction from the field directly to the catheterization laboratory.

RDPS also implemented new tracking mechanisms for external violence reporting to enhance safety and accountability measures.

To prepare for the upcoming roll-out of the Medical Priority Dispatch System, RDPS developed a dispatch matrix to improve call identification and created a comprehensive deployment plan.

RDPS also celebrated the grand opening of the temporary helipad in Bowmanville to improve emergency response capabilities.

RDPS partnered with Simcoe County to explore a narcotic control inventory tracking software for improved management of controlled substances.

RDPS also continued working with LH to address and improve offload delays, ensuring timely patient care transfer.

Quality & Development

RDPS staff performed the following Q&D activities:

- Completed an Ambulance Call Report, reviewing **400** calls.

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- Facilitated return to practice education for **12** paramedics returning from extended leaves of absence.
- Conducted fall continuing education threat management training on 36 dates over 11 weeks to all staff.
- Conducted P100 mask fit testing.
- Attended **19** community outreach events.
- Hosted **50** Grade 9 students for “Take Your Kids to Work” day.
- Completed six-month probationary reviews on **44** recent hires.
- Successfully recruited **one** permanent Q&D Facilitator.
- Coordinated field placement for **46** Primary Care Paramedic students from eight neighbouring community colleges.
- Rostered **65** clients with home and community care for the Palliative Treat and Refer program.

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

Troy Cheseboro
Chief/Director