

Equity, Prevention, Impact: Ottawa Public Health's 2023-2027 Strategic Plan

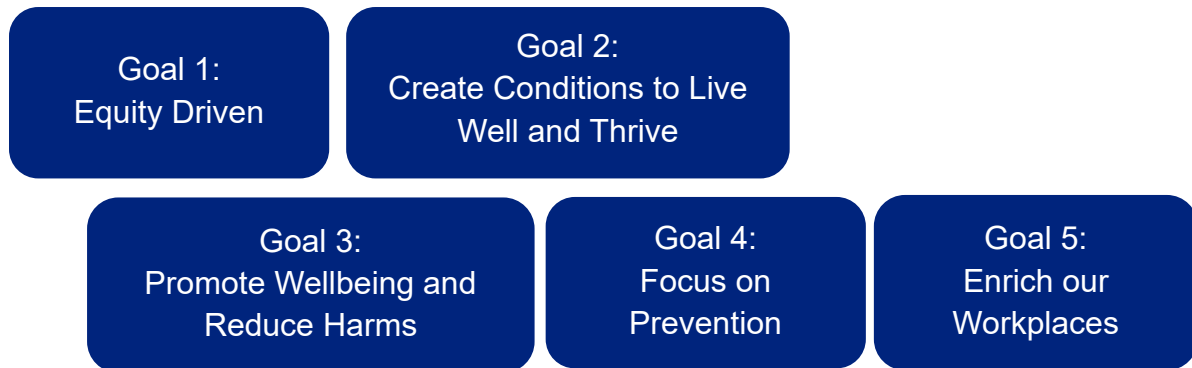
2023 Quarter 4 and 2024 Quarter 1 Update

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Preamble

[Equity, Prevention, Impact: Ottawa Public Health's \(OPH\) 2023-2027 Strategic Plan](#) was adopted by the Board of Health in June of 2023. The Strategic Plan includes five strategic goals to drive progress in targeted areas for change. This strategic update is based on the performance measures identified in the [Strategic Action Plan](#) and also considers progress on key deliverables, available resources, and dependencies.



The status of each goal demonstrates OPH's progress and does not demonstrate the status of the issue (internally or externally). The statuses are defined as:

- Green: On track and progressing as planned.
- Yellow: Minor challenges but is still manageable and there are plans in place to address the challenges.
- Red: Major challenges or risks that threaten success.

As of the end of quarter one of 2024, OPH met its target for goals two and five and was slightly under target for goals one, three, and four.

Goal 1 – Equity-Driven: In working to improve population health outcomes and opportunities, we collaborate to eliminate health inequities, systemic racism, discrimination and oppression.

Summary of Status, Highlights, and Challenges

Status			
Q4 2023 – Q1 2024	Q2 2024 – Q3 2024	Q4 2024 – Q1 2025	Q2 2025 – Q3 2025
Highlights			
<p>Sociodemographic Data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued to support applicable teams¹ to advance the collection, analysis, and use of sociodemographic data (SDD). A scorecard (aggregate measure) has been developed to monitor OPH’s progress. In Q4 of 2023, OPH met with members of Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition for a conversation about a framework and approaches to honor data governance principles when collecting, analyzing, and disseminating SDD. OPH also participated in knowledge exchange with peer public health units and webinars to learn from data governance strategies being employed elsewhere. <p>Addressing Health Equity at Ottawa Public Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed a phased approach to engage teams in amplifying and building upon successes. It involves ongoing collaborative and structured conversations to gather and document information on health equity activities underway at OPH. The approach will produce a departmental situational analysis – a piece of the foundation – needed to support strengthening organizational capacity and relationships across all teams to consistently take action to advance health equity in lasting and measurable ways. <p>Diverse Partnerships and Engagement</p>			

¹ Applicable teams include those were collecting client sociodemographic data (SDD) has been deemed appropriate and necessary to understand and respond to inequities; and, where readiness and adequate resources are in place to commence or advance this work (collection, analysis, and use) in 2024.

- Developed a multi-phased approach to analyze and strengthen the diversity of OPH partnerships. Phase 1 mapped partnerships held or managed by Dr. Vera Etches and identified partners whose work is primarily focused on improving health outcomes for equity-denied groups. The approach includes analyzing the frequency and level of engagement to ensure OPH is building genuine and lasting relationships through meaningful engagement.

Challenges

OPH is re-establishing internal capacity following changes to its structure post-pandemic. The transition of staff within OPH requires dedicating time and effort to enhance capacity, knowledge, and foster new partnerships to advance health equity.

Goal 2 – Create Conditions to Live Well and Thrive: Influence changes in the built, natural and social environments that promote health and wellbeing, and address the impacts of climate change. Essential to this is the interconnection between health and nature.

Summary of Status, Highlights, and Challenges

Status

Q4 2023 – Q1 2024	Q2 2024 – Q3 2024	Q4 2024 – Q1 2025	Q2 2025 – Q3 2025
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Highlights

Healthy Public Policy through Built and Social Environments

- Continued meaningful engagement with City partners, including the Planning, Real Estate and Economic Development department, to advance healthy built, natural, and social environments. This included:
 - Providing public health expertise to inform the development of the new, comprehensive City of Ottawa (the City) Zoning By-law through:

- Informing public discussion papers on key issues from the [Official Plan](#), such as public health, climate resiliency, equity and inclusion.
 - Informing draft provisions within the Zoning By-law for a range of topics, including new provisions to allow for low-risk home-based food businesses.
 - Submitting a [statement](#) outlining how the new Zoning By-law advances health and well-being, which was received by City Council as part of the [New Zoning By-law – Draft 1 report](#).
- Providing public health input to the update of the City’s transportation Multi-modal Level of Service guidelines, which informs the design of various transportation modes within road infrastructure in order to align with the policy directions of the new Official Plan and [Transportation Master Plan](#).
- Supporting public health evidence dissemination through initiatives such as training of future planners to advance healthy communities through Queen’s University School of Urban and Regional Planning lecture, as well as participating in interviews for Envirocentre’s Bikeshare report.
- In November 2023, the Board of Health received the [Strengthening Bridges between Health and Housing Systems](#) memo, outlining OPH’s current contributions to enhancing the health of Ottawa residents who are experiencing homelessness, people with precarious living situations, and residents in supportive and community housing. It also outlined proposed future endeavours to bolster OPH’s contribution to influencing broader systems-level changes within the health and housing sectors.
- Finalized the Healthy @ Home (H@H) funding proposal for submission to Ontario Health East for provision of comprehensive primary care in community housing. As part of this, OPH is engaged in ongoing dialogue to identify effective approaches for co-planning across health and housing sectors. This proposal includes mental health and substance use health services, contributing to OPH’s goal to advance innovative and comprehensive approaches to advance mental health and substance use health ([Strategic Goal 3](#)).
 - “OPH leadership on the H@H file has been exceptional. This proposal practically addresses housing stabilization needs with the physical, mental, and substance use health needs for some of the most marginalized persons in our community. Strategically, the impact will be a more integrated system of care that will reduce demand in our

hospitals and ultimately improve healthcare pathways.” – Mark MacAulay, President & CEO, Ottawa Salas Corporation

- Initiated development of a geo-spatial story telling framework and prototyping opportunities to inform health-promoting decision-making and planning within OPH and the City through visualizing health and well-being data.

Emergency Preparedness

- Engaged the community to build community resilience:
 - Actively engaged with other OPH programs such as Health Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion and Chronic Disease Prevention, and community partners such as Ottawa Community Housing and Aging in Place, as well as the Canadian Red Cross and the Council on Aging to implement the Social Capital in the Capital initiative, which focuses on building, strengthening, and sustaining relationships, social connections, and networks between community agencies and faith based organizations, families, friends, and neighbors, preparing residents to access resources and to help each other before, during, and after emergencies.
 - Facilitated collaborative meetings with City departments on leveraging mapping to enhance health equity in emergency responses.
 - Co-facilitated the City of Ottawa’s virtual Emergency Preparedness for Persons with Disabilities session. Over 230 participants (including community partners, caregivers, and councillors) registered for the session, which focused on key emergency preparedness considerations, making plans, creating emergency kits, and emphasizing the importance of staying connected.
 - Supported the Algonquin College Future of Health and Wellness Speakers Series related to community resilience through emergency management and preparedness.
- Demonstrating OPH’s commitment to health equity, OPH introduced the Health Equity Officer role into the enhanced response structure. This new role acts as a member of the response structure command unit to guide emergency response towards resolutions to consider and achieve health equity.
- Enhanced workforce capacity by delivering emergency management training to OPH employees on measles investigations, adverse drinking water incidents, and City-led wellness initiatives, and delivered Incident Management System (IMS) role-specific training for the Liaison, Communications and Health Equity Officer roles.

- Updated OPH Continuity of Operations Plan (CoOP) and are currently working with all OPH teams to develop program-specific CoOPs to enhance capacity to maintain critical services throughout a prolonged event.

For additional information on emergency management activities in 2023 and 2024 (up to March), refer to the [Emergency Management at Ottawa Public Health – Annual Update report](#), received by the Board of Health in April 2024.

Climate Change and Community Resilience

- OPH strategies to mitigate health risks associated with climate change continue to be developed, implemented, and adopted based on results of Climate Change Health Vulnerability Assessments (CCHVA). In November 2023, the Board of Health received the [Update on Ottawa Public Health's Work on the Climate Change and Health Vulnerability Assessment for Extreme Heat to Improve Community Resilience](#) memo, detailing work to date on the extreme heat CCHVA conducted by OPH. OPH is engaging the Extreme Heat, Cold and Smog Planning Committee to prioritize the identified recommendations from the extreme heat CCHVA and the City's Climate Resiliency Strategy. OPH has also initiated the vector-borne diseases CCHVA.
- Continued to enhance understanding of climate change health impacts through an extreme heat CCHVA presentation at The Ontario Public Health Convention (TOPHC) and by participating in workshops, hosted by the Ottawa Tourism Sustainability Action Plan and the National Capital Commission Regional Sustainability Workshop, to embed synergies with the City's [Climate Change Master Plan](#) and OPH's CCHVA's. OPH's work on climate change and the built environment was published as a [case study](#) by the Canadian Public Health Association together with the Ontario Public Health Association and the Canadian Health Association for Sustainability and Equity.
- The Ontario Resource Centre for Climate Adaptation (ORCCA) awarded the City of Ottawa, and OPH as a partner, support to develop community engagement messaging on climate change with priority populations and support for a cost benefit analysis of climate change action. In addition, OPH is collaborating with the City's Climate Resiliency Unit, which was successful in hiring the Assembly of 7 Generations (A7G) for Indigenous engagement.

Challenges

When advancing healthy public policies, OPH addresses limitations in capacity by focusing on issues with the greatest impact to health and well-being, and remains open to feedback and monitors for unintended consequences when engaging in cross-sectoral work.

The transition of staff, within OPH, the City and among relevant partners, requires dedicating time and effort to enhance capacity, knowledge, and foster new partnerships to advance emergency management.

Goal 3 – Promote Wellbeing and Reduce Harms: Advance innovative and comprehensive approaches to promote mental health and substance use health while reducing stigma; and decreasing harms associated with substance use and addiction across the lifespan.

Summary of Status, Highlights, and Challenges

Status			
2023 – Q1 2024 ²	Q2 2024 – Q3 2024	Q4 2024 – Q1 2025	Q2 2025 – Q3 2025
Highlights			
<p>Reducing Stigma</p> <p>Stigma reduction is foundational to removing barriers to accessing care, reducing other harms and promoting wellness for people with mental health, addictions and substance use health issues. Therefore, stigma reduction is embedded across capacity building trainings, from the Our Community, Our House project (described below) to the Youth Connections Ottawa (YCO) peer to peer model, to direct trainings focused on stigma reduction, to increasing surveillance of people’s</p>			

² Results for Strategic Goal 3 reflect activities and progress from the full-year 2023 and Quarter 1 2024. All other Strategic Goals reflect activities and progress from Quarter 4 2023 and Quarter 1 2024.

experience with stigma through available surveys. Specific highlights of OPH activities from 2023 to Q1 of 2024 include:

- Launched [Stigma: How You Can Impact Change](#), which is an online stigma training e-module. As of March 2024, 142 people have completed the stigma module. Stigma, Party Safer, and overdose prevention trainings were also included in learner orientation for all students completing placements with OPH.
- Advanced work on influencing stigmatizing beliefs around substance use health in the medical profession through the City Studio medical students initiative: Substance Use and Stigma at the University of Ottawa. Stigma and substance use health trainings were provided to 25 first year medical residents by OPH and CAPSA (formerly the Community Addictions Peer Support Association) as part of the student's project to better understand substance use health (SUH) and how to have conversations with patients. The preliminary student project submissions demonstrate that the students are researching local SUH resources and are practicing recommending a wide range of services from across the spectrum of substance use to their clients. The initiative won City Studio's first prize and shifted perceptions of substance use in future primary health care providers.
- Continued the co-location agreement with CAPSA, with an increased focus on healthcare providers through collaborative presentations on stigma and the spectrum of substance use as well as through community outreach activities.
- Participated in the Working on Wellness festival hosted by CAPSA to bring together physical health, mental health, and substance use health communities to support wellness for all people. The event was attended by over 1500 people.
- Increased surveillance of people's experiences with stigma across the province by advocating for the inclusion of mental health and substance use health stigma questions in the Ontario Student Drug Use and Health survey and the Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System (RRFSS). Three modules have been added to RRFSS: Mental Health Stigma, Substance Use Health Stigma, and Mental Health Support. These modules will be included in the 2024 OPH RRFSS survey.

Ottawa's Overdose Response Strategy

In November 2023, the Board of Health received the report: [Ottawa Public Health's Update on Ottawa's Overdose Response Strategy](#). The strategy was updated through

collaborative efforts to better address the toxic unregulated drug supply in a way that encompasses the complexity of the issue. Below is a summary of OPH's actions within the seven pillars of the updated strategy.

Prevention across the lifespan

- Leveraged technology to prevent deaths by overdose and increase knowledge and understanding of different substances through the launch of the [Party Safer online training](#). Post training surveys showed that 92% of participants agree or strongly agree that they feel prepared to respond to an overdose, a 42% increase from the pre-course survey.
- Developed an inventory of prevention work across the lifespan being done by service providers that prevent harms occurring from substance use and promotes wellness. This inventory is intended to be completed in Q2 of 2024.

Stigma Reduction

- Provided training focused on stigma reduction, person first language and overdose prevention in the community to faith leaders and within OPH clinical and client focused teams. Feedback from a faith leader included: “On Wednesday I was called to the bedside of a young man who has died of drug poisoning – and I read over the People-First Language sheet before I left, which really helped me think through how to best support his family. Blessings on the work you do.”

Harm Reduction

- Increased Ontario Naloxone Program partnerships which resulted in 6,413 kits distributed and 1,811 people trained between Q4 of 2023 and Q1 of 2024.
- Continued exploration of feasibility to expand services to address overdose by inhalation with consumption and treatment service partners due to the shift in modes of use with more people now dying from inhalation.
- Increased access to drug checking through the Drug Checking Working Group, which has been initiated following the receipt of laboratory testing equipment (mini mass spectrometer). Requests have been submitted to receive the rapid response take-home fentanyl, benzo and xylazine testing strips.
- Coordinated drug sample checking for consumption and treatment service (CTS) sites during enhanced surveillance (described below) and communicated the results of drug checking to health partners.

- Reduced barriers to learning lifesaving skills and increasing access to naloxone through the newly launched online [Overdose Prevention and Response Training](#), which reached 306 participants from February 12 to March 31, 2024. Pre-and post-surveillance data demonstrate 83% of participants feel prepared to identify and respond to an overdose after completing the e-training compared to 53% before. Qualitative feedback included the following quote: “Extremely important to find out about the resources available to our tenants as I work for Ottawa Community Housing and there is a growing number of overdoses and being able to provide assistance is very important to me in my daily work.”

Co-ordinated Access to Treatment and Services

- Increased access to substance use treatment (suboxone) for people who face barriers through the expanded Wellbeing Response Team. This is a collaboration between the Ottawa Paramedics, The Royal Ottawa Mental Health Centre, The Ottawa Hospital, and OPH.
- Enhanced outreach to street involved or unstably housed people who use drugs in priority neighbourhoods through foot and drop-in outreach with key partners, resulting in 81 clinical service encounters, 169 referrals and 7 wellness/overdose checks.

Data and Surveillance

- Increased availability of timely overdose data, including location, through the launch of the [Overdose Overview Tool](#) on the updated [Stop Overdose Ottawa website](#).
- Implemented the Enhanced Surveillance System (in response to service disruptions at two CTS sites) to monitor health, social, business, resident impacts. The response includes increased monitoring, outreach, and reporting back to health and social service partners through the Overdose Prevention and Response Taskforce as well as to local business and community associations. OPH convened partners to look for solutions to address the current issue.
- Collaborated with Ottawa Inner City Health and the ByWard Market Balanced Task Force to increase the number of Block Leaders available in the community in relation to CTS service disruption.

Community Safety and Wellbeing

- Advanced the work of the Guiding Council to establish an alternative crisis response team for mental health, addictions, and SUH issues which began the pilot phase in Centretown in the Spring of 2024.
- Innovated with people with lived and living experience and expertise to improve the issues cited as a breakdown in street culture through the establishment of the Block Leader program with the Byward Market Balanced task force.

Cluster and Response Strategy

- Issued timely drug warnings and share information on local trends that impact health and wellbeing (i.e., new substances in the toxic drug supply such as xylazine and benzodiazepines).
- Issued a [public health alert](#) to warn residents about the risk of overdose related to the toxicity of the unregulated drug supply following growing concerns from the community and increased reach of these alerts to partners through the Stop Overdose Ottawa alert system.

Preventing and Responding to Suicide

- Launched the Youth Nominated Suicide Prevention Program as part of the Suicide Prevention Ottawa (SPO) Network. PLEO (formerly Parents Lifeline of Eastern Ontario) is the lead with the Royal Mental Health Care Centre. OPH has been a contributing partner in the program, supporting securing third party funding and expanding the program.
- Improved effectiveness of suicide prevention training by returning to in-person safeTALK training. OPH, trained 456 intermediaries who support vulnerable communities and individuals throughout Ottawa in 2023 and 73 in Q1 of 2024. An average of 94.5% of participants from 2023 to Q1 of 2024 in the safeTALK training stated they were now prepared to support someone with thoughts of suicide.
- Increased capacity to provide suicide prevention and post-vention by training an additional seven OPH employees to deliver safeTALK training and two employees to be part of the Post Suicide Support Team in Ottawa.
- Developed a new Suicide Prevention and Crisis Intervention training to further build skill development and safe practices for those supporting Ottawa's most at-risk individuals and communities, including faith leaders, Ottawa Community Housing Workers, Community Engagement Team, and others.

Prevention and Equity-Driven Interventions Across Sectors and Communities

- Launched the [Mental Health, Addictions and Substance Use Health \(MHASUH\) Community dashboard](#) and completed subsequent planned data updates. The dashboard is an innovative and collaborative surveillance tool designed to impact system and program planning. Over 100 partners received training on how to use the dashboard. Feedback has been received from partners stating that data from the dashboard is being used to influence research, inform the needs for programs based on identified gaps, and to provide evidence of identified needs when seeking funding, which contributes to OPH's goal to gather, analyze and share evidence on local health needs and inequities ([Strategic Goal 4](#)).
- Presented at the FRAYME Institute's National Conference to demonstrate how using dashboard data informs programming, highlighting YCO as an example.
- Delivered Pop-Up Hubs and mental health, addictions and SUH training to 160 staff and community leaders in five community houses. This was a pilot in Q4 of 2023 for the renewed neighbourhood approach (see next bullet).
- Launched the Our Community, Our House, Working Together on Wellness community mobilization model in 2024 in collaboration with community partners, which is a renewed neighbourhood approach aimed at meeting the unique needs of people in one given location and creating a safe and healthy community with support from all community members.
- Increased impact and equity of YCO peer to peer program through the completion of five focus groups of over 80 youth from diverse backgrounds. The purpose of these focus groups was to ensure impact, effectiveness, and sustainability of the program for all youth, including youth from diverse backgrounds. The program was updated to include and reflect current information on addictions and SUH, stigmatizing language, recreational screen time, and inclusivity of Ottawa's diverse populations and backgrounds.
- Contributed to Black Mental Health Week events in collaboration with community partners, including a launch session, Let's Talk About Men's Health Matters, Joy in Community, and have THAT talk sessions. Over 185 participants attended across all events.
- Delivered capacity building sessions to health and social service providers on coping with stress, have THAT talk, crisis management and self-care, compassion fatigue and burnout, and work-life balance. Client satisfaction

surveys show that 97% of participants intend to use what they have learned from the session and 100% of participants know where to access resources.

Healthy Growth and Development

- Established a direct referral pathway for clients with AccessMHA, a regionally coordinated service that helps people in eastern Ontario find services for mental health and SUH issues, to the Healthy Babies Healthy Children program.
- Worked with Community and Social Services Department (CSSD) to revise the policy for accessing family shelters. The modification now allows homeless pregnant people to access family shelters at 35 weeks of pregnancy replacing the previous requirement of waiting until childbirth.
- Participated in a provincial initiative to develop a new provincial care plan for clients experiencing perinatal mood and anxiety disorder (PMAD) in collaboration with the Public Health Nursing Practice, Research, and Education Program (PHN-PREP) (McMaster University).
- Healthy Growth and Development (HGD) program employees received Interpersonal Psychotherapy (IPT) and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) training.

Challenges

Changing Community Needs and Environment

Clients are presenting with more complex needs, which are compounded by the lack of access to primary care, including mental health and SUH services, and the lack of affordable housing. This is being seen among the populations OPH serves, including through the HGD program and the Harm Reduction program.

OPH implemented the enhanced surveillance system in response to the service disruption of two CTS sites to monitor the health impact. The response includes increased monitoring, outreach and reporting back to health and social service partners through the Overdose Prevention and Response Taskforce as well as to local business and community associations. OPH convened partners to look for solutions to address concerns of increased social disorder and a breakdown of street culture in the ByWard Market area and surrounding neighborhoods, as well as impacts to clients in need of health, social and harm reduction services.

Continued changing patterns of drug use from injection to inhalation are leaving people who smoke drugs at greater risk of overdose and lacking supervised inhalation services. The latest provincial CTS application guidelines explicitly state that the provincially funded CTS programming does not include funding for supervised inhalation services.

Sustainable Funding

In 2024, Ministry of Health one-time funding is being allocated to support the provincial Strengthening Public Health Strategy. As a result, one-time funding that historically supported Community Needle Retrieval services, including the Needle Drop Box and Needle Hunters programs, is not available. OPH is exploring potential areas for collaboration to find efficiencies in service delivery for needle retrieval in Ottawa.

Goal 4 – Focus on Prevention: Gather, analyze and share evidence on local health needs and inequities with the healthcare system to strengthen clinical prevention. We will engage with healthcare system partners to help inform decision-making.

Summary of Status, Highlights, and Challenges

Status			
Q4 2023 – Q1 2024	Q2 2024 – Q3 2024	Q4 2024 – Q1 2025	Q2 2025 – Q3 2025
Highlights			
<p>Chronic Disease Prevention</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued to co-lead the Development of Common Chronic Disease Prevention (CDP) Indicators project through Public Health Ontario’s (PHO) locally driven collaborative project (LDCP) program. The project aims to develop clear and consistent measures of performance to understand the effectiveness of and to demonstrate the relevance of CDP programs, with a current focus on developing common indicators in the area of nutrition as a protective factor for chronic disease prevention. The final report will be 			

complete by June 2024. OPH will continue to act as a lead public health unit to continue to develop indicators for other topic areas and to support implementation across the province.

- Delivered a 4-hour TOPHC workshop, Measuring What Matters: A Collaborative Approach to Chronic Disease Prevention Program Outcome Measurement, to 75 public health professionals related to the above LDCP project.
- Continued to inform the Ministry of Health's review of the Ontario Public Health Chronic Disease Prevention and Well-being program standard through the Public Health Leadership Table: Chronic Disease Prevention Working Group. The expected objectives of this working group have been achieved and proposed revisions to the OPHS, including chronic disease prevention, have been released to public health units for consultation. OPH is preparing a response to the consultation.
- The Ottawa Hospital "superscreener" has provided cervical cancer screening (PAP testing) through the OPH sexual health centre twice in 2024. Future clinics are aiming to be scheduled every 2 months at the sexual health centre, based on the availability of the superscreener.

Access to Evidence

- Conducted an option analysis, informed by a diverse group of public health professionals, which identified key focus areas to support healthcare system partners to access evidence to inform equitable healthcare planning and patient care. The focus areas are being confirmed and aim to be finalized in Q3 of 2024.
- Ottawa Health Team-Équipe Santé Ottawa (OHT-ÉSO) Performance Measurement Work Group (chaired by OPH member) completed an environmental scan of SDD tools to create a draft recommended Common SDD List for health system partners to consider using to increase our collective understanding of local health inequities. Next steps include follow up with Ontario Health partners to ensure alignment with any plans for SDD collection at the broader system level and the development of tools to support OHT-ESO partners to implement SDD collection in their respective agencies.
- Presented the findings of the [Lessons learned from the collection of sociodemographic data during the COVID-19 pandemic](#) LDCP project to the APHEO Health Equity Workgroup.

Access to Primary Care

- Health providers from the Lowertown East, Lowertown West and Sandy Hill neighbourhoods (e.g., Ottawa Inner City Health, Sandy Hill Community Health Centre, Bruyere Family Health Team, Byward Family Health Team, Nurse Practitioners who received NP-led clinic funding, Canadian Mental Health Association, The Royal, The Ottawa Hospital) were convened by OPH and agreed to work together under The Ottawa Health Team/Equip Sante Ottawa's Project Charter to increase attachment to primary care in these neighbourhoods and improve mental health and substance use treatment in these neighbourhoods with resident input.

Challenges

OPH is seeking to facilitate access to evidence that is both new and useful. Formal communication channels to primary care providers is limited. OPH is leveraging the existing Physician Update channel and is also exploring alternative data dissemination pathways using digital solutions.

While various health system partners were engaged on SDD collection, resources associated with this work were reallocated to support CTS enhanced surveillance.

Goal 5 – Enrich our Workplaces: Foster a diverse, inclusive, equitable and healthy workforce grounded in a culture of learning and growth. We will support and develop employees and optimize and innovate our processes to better serve the community.

Summary of Status, Highlights, and Challenges

Status

Q4 2023 – Q1 2024	Q2 2024 – Q3 2024	Q4 2024 – Q1 2025	Q2 2025 – Q3 2025
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Highlights

A Diverse, Inclusive, and Equitable Workforce

- Consultations on the OPH Microaggression Procedure were held with over 200 employees (Leadership Team, Anti-Racism Anti-Oppression Community of Practice, Indigenous, Black, and racialized employees) and individuals from key City departments (CSSD, Finance and Corporate Services Department, and the Office of the City Clerk Department). The procedure is planned to be launched in Q3 of 2024 following robust training to leadership and employees.
- Completed the Indigenous Cultural Safety (ICS) Organizational Assessment and Self-Assessment and received a draft report from San'yas on findings of both assessments.
 - Three hundred and sixty-seven staff completed the San'yas ICS Self-Assessment survey, achieving a 51% response rate.
 - In October 2023, the OPH Senior Leadership Team (SLT) participated in a workshop with San'yas focusing on the questions related to engagement with Indigenous partners across multiple areas. During this time, San'yas presented an executive summary with key findings.
 - The ICS Organizational Assessment was completed by all senior leaders across the organization, representing all program and service areas.
- Established a tripartite collaboration between OPH's Medical Officer of Health and Business and Development Support Service Area (MOHBDS) and Health Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (HEDI) team and the City's Community Social Services Department (CSSD) on diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives to maximize impact.

Employee Psychological Safety and Wellbeing

- Nearly 450 employees (45% response rate) completed the Guarding Minds at Work (GM@W) survey. The OPH-wide results were shared through various channels, as was a breakdown of data by Service Area. Results demonstrated four areas of strength: civility and respect, engagement, supportive and connected workplace culture, and protection of physical safety. Areas of action provide opportunities to improve workload management and balance, recognition and fairness, and trust and transparency.
- Hosted an Employee Recognition Event as an appreciation for employee's contribution to OPH's COVID-19 response. Over 200 employees attending, creating an opportunity to connect with colleagues.

- Created a Colleagues Care Plan, informed by the GM@W results, focused on three themes: Listen, Connect, Advance.
 - Held an Insight Session with 50 members of the leadership team to discuss the GM@W results.
 - Engaged employees in several opportunities to discuss the GM@W results, including: five Insight Sessions attended by 28 employee and 21 Insight Sessions for target groups, reaching approximately 100 employees. Service Areas and teams also held sessions to discuss their specific results.
 - Held a Diversity Café on Burnout at Work with 34 employees.
- Piloting a new on-call initiative in the Environmental Health and Infectious Disease Service Area to promote better work-life balance and enhance leadership well-being during evenings and weekends. This initiative also fosters improved cross-team capacity building and knowledge sharing.

Equitable Learning and Development for All Employees

- Hired a permanent Learning and Development Coordinator who is responsible for overseeing department-level learning and development initiatives.
- Delivered training sessions to members of the leadership team on performance appraisal and Individual Development Plans, budget management, and procurement.
- Completed the first and second phase of the succession planning process aimed at Management and Professional Exempt (MPE) employees (i.e., management), encompassing the identification of critical positions, validation of requisite competencies, and skills essential for these positions. The upcoming launch of phase three is underway, which will focus on identifying employees keen on enhancing their competencies and skills for potential consideration in filling these positions during vacancies. Phase three will be approached through a lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Members of the SLT, MPE, and HEDI Program leadership team participated in interviews and focus groups to inform the development of scenario-based diversity, equity, and inclusion training sessions. All leadership team members with direct reports will complete scenario-based training in Q2 to build readiness and skills in advance in the launch of the OPH Microaggression Procedure.
- Facilitated Black History and Anti-Racism learning sessions during Black History Month, which were attended by 161 employees across all levels of OPH.

- Developed a scholarship program to support licensing of foreign trained dentists working with OPH.
- OPH is currently working with the City of Ottawa to complete a review and job evaluation of the Public Health Inspector (PHI) position description to update it to accurately reflect the current experience, qualifications, skills, and education expectations of the position. As an interim measure, OPH has worked with City of Ottawa Payroll and offered a market rate adjustment to raise the level of pay for PHIs, making it comparable with counterparts across the province. For additional information on PHI recruitment efforts, refer to the [OPH Adapted Inspection Program Approach report](#), approved by the Board of Health in April 2024.

Challenges

To foster a diverse, equitable and inclusive workforce, OPH is looking forward to the City's support to implement LEAD IT, a diversity and inclusion strategic hiring program, which has been delayed. To continue to advance the leadership team's knowledge and skills, employees in a leadership position are completing DEI scenario-based training and microaggression training in Q2 of 2024.

The high demand of operational work has created challenges for employees to participate in engagement sessions following the GM@W survey, as well as contribute to the Wellness @ Work (W@W) committee. The W@W committee will examine employee input from other sources to ensure wellness actions meet employee needs.