

**Report to
Rapport au:**

**Ottawa Board of Health
Conseil de santé d'Ottawa
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Ward: CITY WIDE / À L'ÉCHELLE DE LA VILLE File Number: ACS2025-OPH-HED-0001

SUBJECT: Update on Neighborhood Health and Wellness Hubs: Progress and Path Forward

OBJET: Mise à jour sur les centres de santé et de bien-être de quartier: progrès et perspectives d'avenir

REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Ottawa Board of Health receive this report for information on Ottawa Public Health's continuing efforts to reduce barriers to access to health services and optimize health outcomes for all Ottawa residents.

RECOMMANDATIONS DU RAPPORT

Que le Conseil de santé d'Ottawa reçoit ce rapport pour information sur les efforts continus de Santé publique Ottawa visant à réduire les obstacles à l'accès aux services de santé et à optimiser les résultats de santé pour tous les résidents d'Ottawa.

BACKGROUND

This report focuses on highlighting the progress made through the Neighborhood Health and Wellness Hubs (NHHW) model and describes plans for the NHHW to continue addressing community needs by increasing access to health and social services.

The NHHW initiative was initially established in Ottawa to address disparities in access to the protection of vaccines, highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic. These NHHWs were strategically located in neighborhoods with high COVID-19 infection rates, low vaccine uptake, and socioeconomic disadvantage. NHHWs offer health and social services where people live to support equitable and more convenient access. The approach of bringing services closer to populations facing greater barriers to health is coordinated so that teams across OPH can contribute their expertise and resources, informed by data on community needs. The collaborative model includes extensive partnerships, both internal and external.

The NHHW in Ottawa offer a variety of free, drop-in public health and social services aimed at improving community health and well-being.

Services provided by OPH include:

- **Immunizations:** Administration of COVID-19 vaccines, routine vaccinations for children and youth, and flu vaccines. These services are available to residents facing access barriers, including newcomers without OHIP coverage.
- **Dental Screenings:** Registered dental hygienists provide free dental screenings and fluoride varnish applications and assist with enrolling in programs like Healthy Smiles Ontario and the Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program to access

preventive and/or emergency dental care based on low-income level. All ages are welcome.

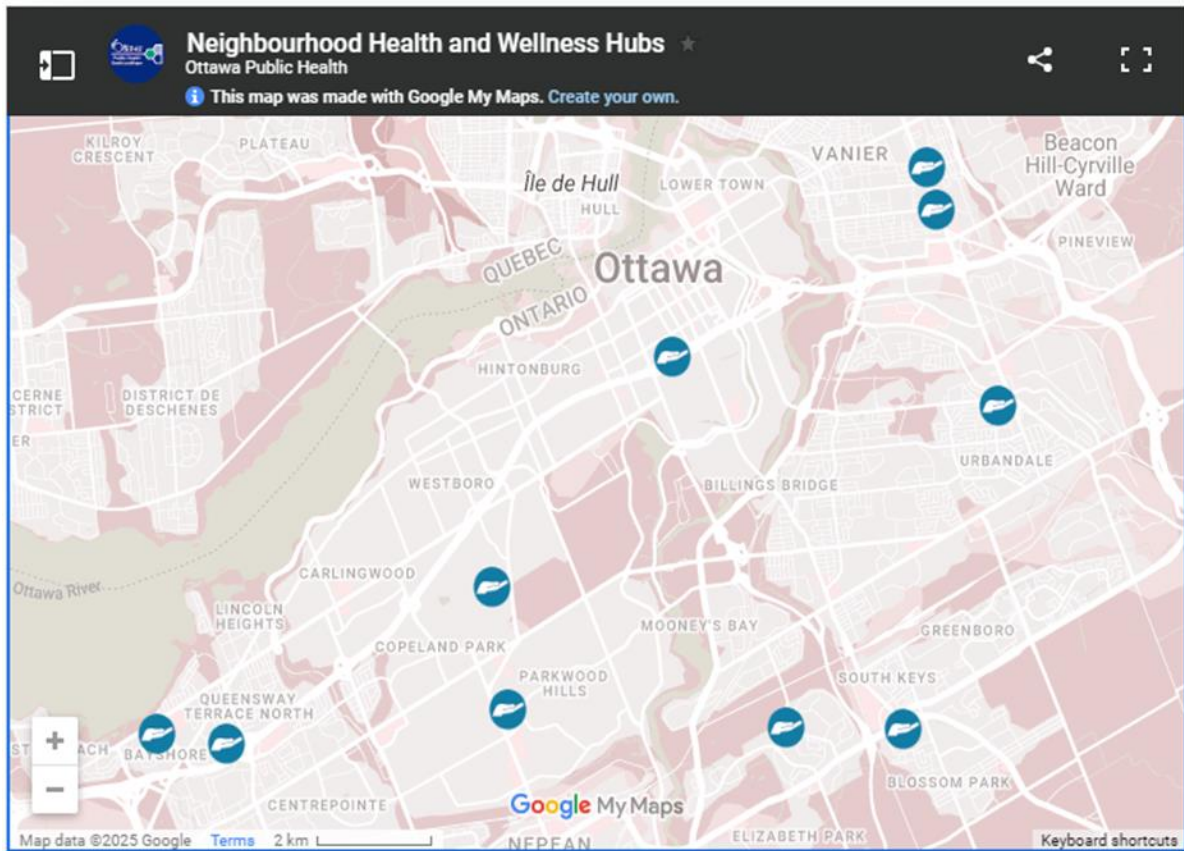
- **Parenting Support:** Public health nurses offer guidance on various parenting topics, such as infant feeding, safe sleep practices, child development, home safety, and parental mental health.

Services provided by OPH, in collaboration with community partners, include:

- **Employment and Social Services:** Access to social assistance programs, including financial aid, housing support, employment services, and referrals.
- **Diabetes Screening:** Screening services to identify individuals at risk and provide appropriate referrals.
- **Enhanced Services for Older Adults:** Services provided at the African, Caribbean, Black Wellness Resource Centre, Bayshore Field House and Rideau High School (Rideau-Rockcliffe Community Resource Centre). These include information sessions and services about Aging Well, Service Canada Programs, Home Support Services, Cancer Screening and more.
- **Cancer screening:** The Champlain Screening Outreach Program helps people access cancer screening services. This program is for individuals in Eastern Ontario without a family doctor or nurse practitioner. Individuals can access screening for breast, cervical, colorectal, and lung cancer based on provincial eligibility criteria.

NHWHs are strategically located across Ottawa to serve residents who may face barriers to accessing traditional health and social services, based on health and socioeconomic information. There are currently 10 NHWHs located throughout the city. The number has ranged from 10 to 15, and we are continually exploring additional and alternative sites to maximize community impact.

See appendix for list of locations, and services by location.



DISCUSSION

Aligning NHHWs with Ottawa Public Health's Strategic Objectives: A Path to Health Equity

NHHWs exemplify OPH's strategic priorities by offering impactful, prevention -focused and equitable services where people live.

Equity-Driven: The NHHW service delivery prioritizes equity by locating services in high priority neighborhoods where measures of health status indicate greater needs, addressing barriers to access, and building trust through community engagement and relationship-building.

Prevention-Focused: By providing proactive interventions like vaccination clinics, cancer screening, and wellness programs poor health outcomes are prevented. By,

working collaboratively with community members and external partners to understand community-specific needs, earlier intervention may be possible.

Impact-Maximizing: By coordinating resources and aligning with data-driven priorities, the NHHWs deliver high-value services. Bringing services together in one place is not only more efficient for OPH teams, but also for clients accessing the services. OPH is committed to ongoing improvement of services by implementing recommendations from a 2024 Neighbourhood Health and Wellness Hub evaluation and ongoing community feedback. The team focuses on supporting new initiatives within the hubs model such as supporting people without primary care providers to get cancer screening and programs for older adults, addressing current community needs.

Key activities in 2024

The NHHW initiative has made substantial progress in developing the model beyond vaccine delivery sites. Key activities in 2024 include:

The NHHW model improved overall access to public health services, supporting over 16,500 interactions. Additionally, the breadth of services expanded to include partnerships to enable cancer screenings and enhanced services for older adults. In 2024, the NHHW programs strengthened partner engagement through regular dialogue with internal and external partners, ensuring that the program's goals were aligned with community needs.

NHHW's 2024 Evaluation, Community Members' Feedback and Rapid Situational Analysis (RSA):

In 2024, OPH evaluated the NHHWs and incorporated community members' feedback to identify strengths and opportunities for growth. Together, the evaluation findings and feedback showed:

Strengths to Build Upon:

- NHHWs were highly effective in addressing vaccination needs and reaching individuals who faced barriers to accessing vaccines. Community feedback highlighted positive experiences with NHHW staff, particularly their professionalism and adaptability.
- Partners and staff shared their appreciation and praised the effective logistical coordination and communication from the hub team.
- Low-barrier access is appreciated: No appointments are required, and the locations in neighbourhood settings promote ease of access for all community members in the area.
- Enhanced visibility for Ottawa Public Health (OPH): Strengthened OPH's presence in neighborhoods with less advantage.

Opportunities for Growth:

- Opportunities to enhance community awareness of the NHHWs and their services and to further develop OPH's understanding of community needs through increasing outreach and cross-promotion of services.
- Optimizing operations to overcome current challenges related to alignment between service demands, staffing, locations and hours of operation for better coherence.
- Enhanced services and system navigation: Introducing new offerings through partnerships, tailoring programs to youth, improving access, and incorporating programs targeting nutrition.

Insights from literature reviews and consultations with other public health units (e.g., Hamilton Public Health) have informed operational planning. As we move forward, the plan is to continue engaging with other public health units for 2025-2027 to share evolving practices.

The NHHW evaluation in 2024 required OPH to reflect on what falls within their responsibilities and what should be supported by partners:

In conducting and reflecting on the evaluation of the NHHWs, the team has identified services and offerings that align with the goals and core mission of OPH that can be delivered in the NHHWs. As well, the evaluation pointed to gaps in healthcare services where partner support is important to meet the collective goal of promoting health equity and optimizing health outcomes. Gaps identified include mental health support services, social services navigation, social support, and healthy living resources, primary health care services and housing support systems.

Community engagement will continue to be a key strategy for gathering feedback and aligning community needs with service delivery. The rapid situational analysis (RSA) identified key assets and successes that pave the way towards a sustainable NHHW model, such as high awareness of the NHHWs across OPH teams, varied services and programs offered, and adequate frequency of services. The core recommendation for internal OPH operations was to change the overall approach from organizing the delivery of separate services in different community sites to working collaboratively to advance a shared agenda through the NHHWs with community partners. The new, emerging integrated public health services approach will increase impact, effectiveness, and efficiency.

Next Steps: NHHW Strategic Plan for 2025-2027

The Neighbourhood Health and Wellness Hubs plan for 2025-2027 outlines three core pillars. The focus for 2025-2027 aligns with OPH's 2023-2027 strategy, building on the progress made in 2023-2024. This plan reinforces maintaining, sustaining, and enhancing services to continue addressing community health needs while remaining responsive to evolving demands.

The plan outlines three core pillars:

- **Maintain** current service levels to ensure consistent support for the community while providing consistent services that meet community needs.
- **Sustain** long-term operations by optimizing resources and building capacity including optimizing current NHHW infrastructure and improving operations.

- **Enhance** service quality and responsiveness to better address emerging and evolving needs.

Enhancement Plan includes:

- **Evaluation of Current Locations:** Assess each service location using epidemiological data and the Ottawa Neighborhood Study Report, and community and partner input, to identify strengths, challenges, and areas for improvement.
- **Using data and feedback to guide decisions and improve services:** Leverage insights from data including input from clients using the services, to guide decisions about optimizing services, consolidating locations, or focusing resources where they are most needed.
- **Prioritizing Quality:** Prioritize enhancing service quality at existing locations, focusing on operational efficiency, community engagement, enhancing of partnerships to meet evolving needs of the community, building a solid foundation for future potential expansion.

RURAL IMPLICATIONS

Ottawa Public Health is actively considering the needs of its rural residents and is committed to finding solutions to improve wellness service accessibility in these areas. OPH has heard feedback from rural residents that limited public transportation and longer travel times can limit access to health services. OPH recognizes the importance of addressing these issues and has implemented some mobile options for programs like immunization, when budgets allow. OPH will continue to monitor available data and feedback from residents and seek out opportunities to provide public health services in rural Ottawa when feasible.

OPH is dedicated to working with external partners such as primary healthcare providers to offer services in rural areas in the future.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal impediments to receiving the information contained in this report.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no risk management implications associated with this report

ASSET MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no asset management implications with this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS

There are no accessibility impacts associated with this report.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no environmental implications associated with this report.

ALIGNMENT WITH OTTAWA PUBLIC HEALTH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The NHWH align with OPH's broader goals for 2023-2027, particularly Goal 1, as described in this report.

DISPOSITION

To be received by the Board of Health for informational purposes.