



PROTECTING OUR COMMUNITY'S HEALTH

Ottawa Public Health's 2019-2022
Strategy
- 2021 Quarter 1 Progress Update

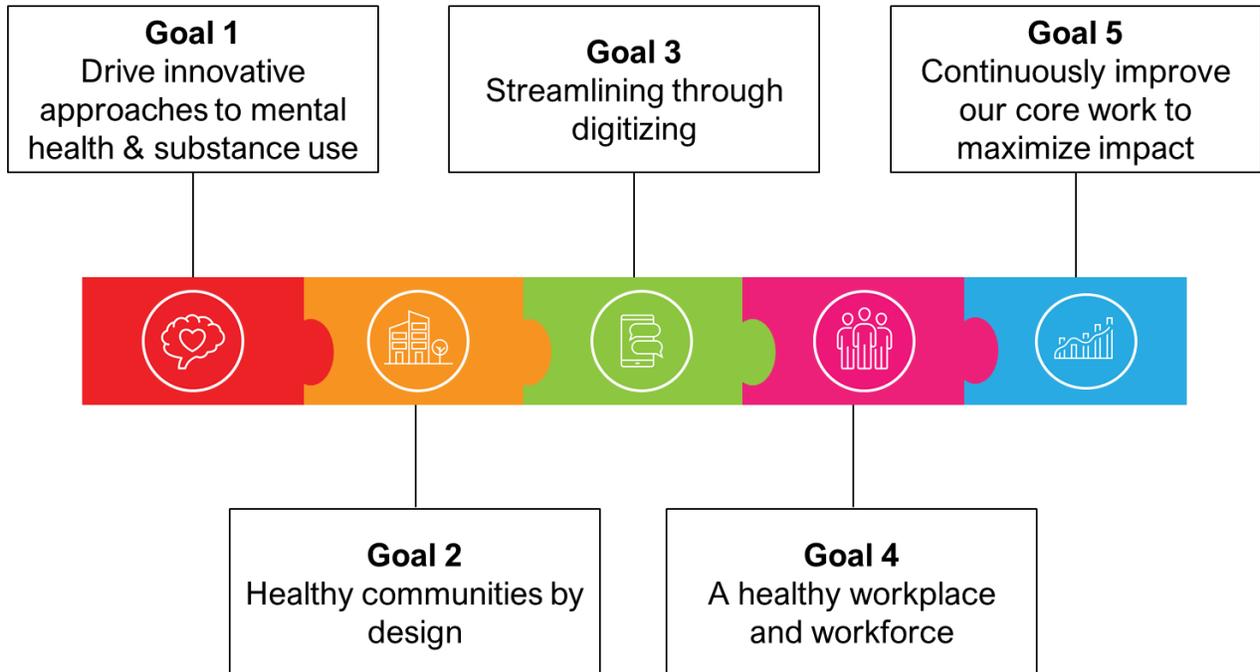
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Strategy Overview



Strategic Goals





Goal 1 – Drive innovative approaches to mental health and substance use – Status, Highlights and Achievements



Q1 2021 Status

Highlights

Workshops and Training

- Mental Health Promotion & Stigma Reduction workshops delivered to over 250 participants.
- 55 elected officials and their staff received *The power of language* training, a workshop addressing stigma on substance use, mental health and COVID-19. Workshop participants stated they have a greater understanding of the impacts of stigma and where to access mental health and substance use resources post-workshop.
- Foster resilient communities by using targeted strategies to address risk and protective factors for mental health: 310 participants attended workplace mental health workshops; 32 faith leaders received training on mental health and crisis management and; 841 attended mental health promotion workshops for African Caribbean Black communities including presentation on Black Mental Health Week
- Suicide prevention: 79 service providers and faith leaders participated in suicide prevention training.

Resource Development and Promotion

- Development of *haveTHATtalk* About Racism and Allyship videos
- Promotion of mental health and substance use resources, including [AccessMHA](#), to partners, primary care physicians and the general public in order to facilitate increased access to mental health and substance use services.
- Person first language resource sheet developed and co-branded with the Community Addictions Peer Support Association (CAPSA)
- Shared draft resources for partnership initiative with Tungasuvvingat Inuit to improve access and decrease barriers as well as increase access to Non-Insured Health Benefits Nicotine Replacement Therapy at pharmacies.

Programming

- Safer Supply Ottawa Pilot received an additional 2 years of federal funding. This will allow longer term programming for current clients, a more robust evaluation component, and an opportunity to expand much-needed services to additional clients; the team will also be exploring the addition of a safer fentanyl patch component to current services available.
- Expansion of Ontario Naloxone Distribution Program to include the Montfort Hospital as well as working with the Ministry of Health and local partners to explore naloxone kit distribution with first responders.
- Providing backbone support and held first quarterly meeting of Community of Practice for smoking reduction and quit service providers in 2021

Challenges

- Challenges in the creation of the *haveTHATtalk* About Racism & Allyship videos due to COVID-19 restrictions and limitations placed on in-person filming.
- Gaps in naloxone kit access where partners serving at risk client groups are experiencing barriers to accessing the pharmacy program but do not meet the current mandate of the MOH Ontario Naloxone Program (i.e. police services, etc.).



Goal 2 Healthy Communities by Design - Status, Highlights and Achievements



Q1 2021 Status

Highlights

COVID-19 Wise and Vaccine Awareness and Behaviours

OPH has been engaging with Ottawa residents during the pandemic through voluntary surveys and forums on the Engage Ottawa platform and from January 18 to February 15, 2021, OPH hosted a vaccine specific survey on Engage Ottawa to collect qualitative information from residents about their thoughts, feelings and perceptions of the new COVID-19 vaccines.

In January 2021, OPH also enlisted EKOS Research Associates to conduct telephone polling among Ottawa residents to learn more about their perceptions of COVID-19 vaccines, and potential barriers to uptake. By the end of March, a total of 1101 respondents completed the EKOS survey. Key highlights include:

- 91% of respondents indicated they will continue taking precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19 (wearing a mask and physical distancing) over the next 6 months.
- 86% of respondents intend to get a COVID-19 vaccine once available
- 68% of respondents feel they have enough information about COVID-19 vaccine to decide whether to get vaccinated

OPH continued to provide communications to support informed decisions. OPH's "Misinformation Campaign" was developed to help residents identify what information regarding the pandemic is true or false. The campaign highlights misinformation on vaccines and other topics through graphics, videos, texts and posts addressing myth vs facts, true or false, "did you know", and general informative posts on OPH platforms. The OPH Communications Team disseminates these posts regularly to highlight the importance of sharing information from reputable sources and of thinking critically about information online.

The OPH website continued as a one-stop shop for all updates, including mental health resources, COVID-19 testing sites, vaccine access and actively countering misinformation. In addition, vaccination figures broken down by availability, vaccine type administered and rates by age group were added to the Daily COVID-19 Dashboard.

COVID-19 Control and Containment in Ottawa

The first month of 2021 saw Ottawa bend down the surge of residents testing positive for COVID-

19. However, by March Ottawa was once again seeing COVID-19 rates increasing. Variants of Concern (VOC) were starting to show up in Ottawa and pose an additional challenge, allowing the virus to spread more easily and quickly than ever before.

Reflecting on lessons learned from previous surges and experience, many of OPH's response teams modified their models of delivery standards and practices in Quarter 1 to better deal with surge levels. This is especially true for the COVID Case and Contact Management Team.

In February, the Ontario Ministry of Health mandated that OPH move from the current case and contact management system it had implemented in 2020 to a new provincial solution. Significant effort was undertaken to quickly plan, develop and train over 800 employees to be ready in time for the mid-April implementation date. This project impacted many OPH response teams including the COVID Case and Contact Management team, Infection Prevention and Control team, School Team, Epidemiology and Information Solutions.

Throughout Quarter 1, OPH was continuously reinforcing guidance to support schools to remain open as essential to children, youth, families and communities.

In collaboration with CHEO and local school boards, OPH supported COVID-19 rapid testing in neighbourhood more severely impacted by COVID-19. The goal of these clinics for students, staff and families was to actively screen youth and adults in order to reduce exposures in school. In addition to CHEO staff administering tests, the sites were staffed by OPH Public Health Nurses and community partners who provide language/cultural assistance and access to wrap-around supports to help individuals and families facing barriers to testing or isolation as it relates to food security, housing security, income support and other assistance.

Neighbourhood-based efforts continued in Quarter 1, working closely with the Ottawa Health Team, to increase support for access to COVID-19 testing and self-isolation.

In Quarter 1, the Infection, Prevention and Control team experienced a third surge in outbreaks in long-term care (LTCH) and retirement homes (RH), as indicated in *Figure 1* and *Figure 2* below. This was compounded by the presence of variants of concern (VOCs). However, despite VOCs, the total outbreak related case counts, hospitalizations and deaths were lower than previous waves.

Figure 1. Long Term Care Outbreaks and Case Over Time

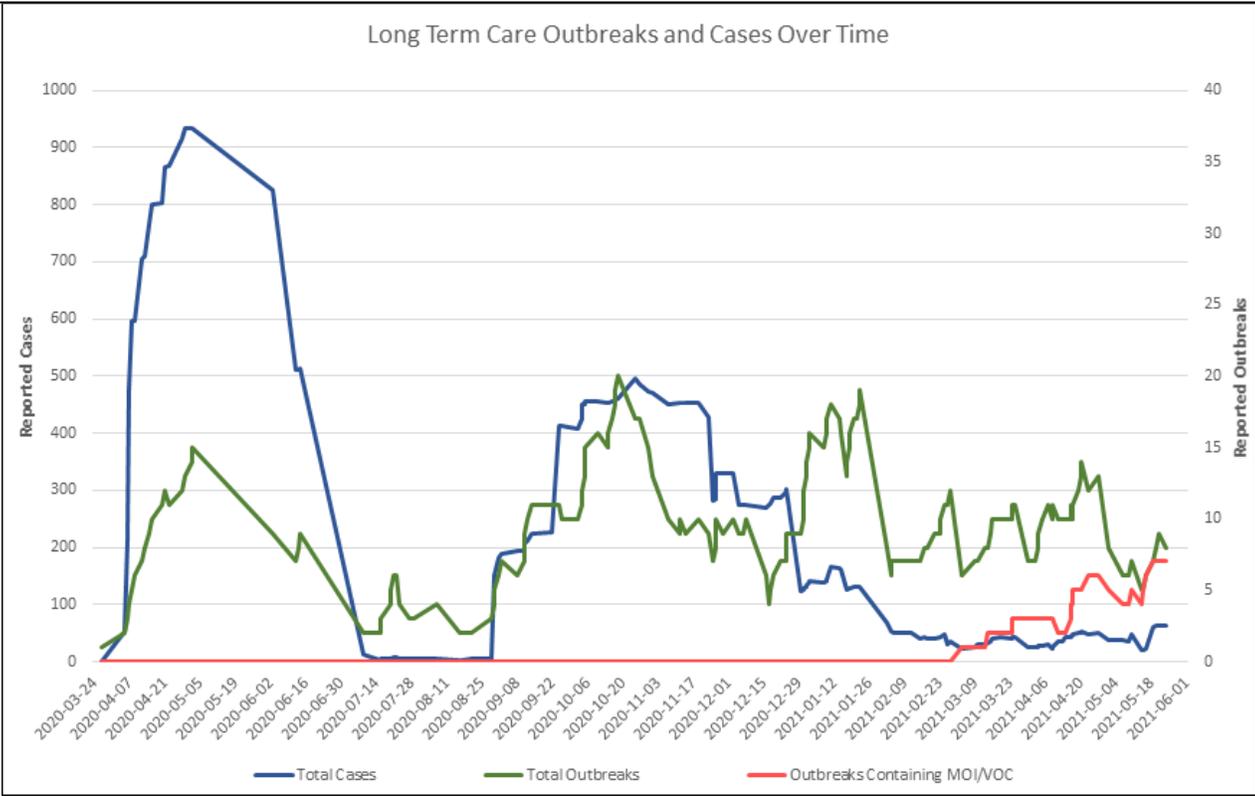
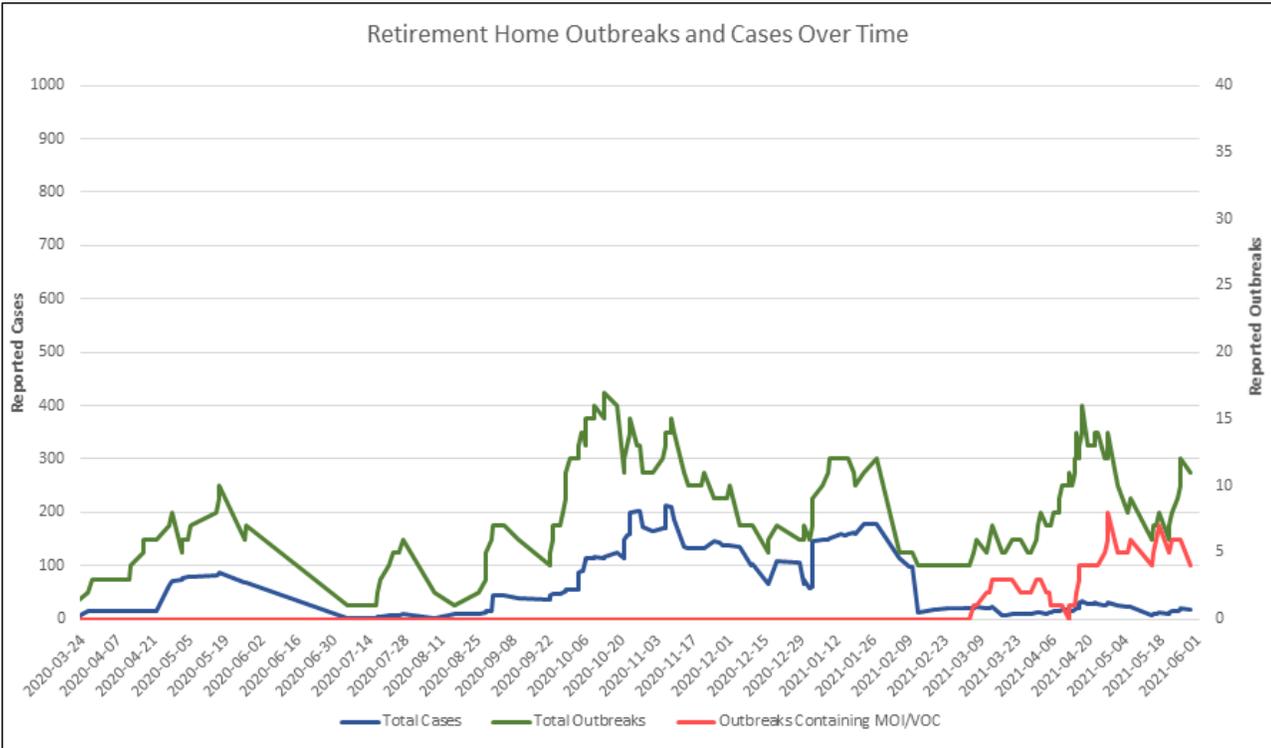


Figure 2. Retirement Home Outbreaks and Cases Over Time



These reductions are likely attributable to widespread resident vaccination, as Quarter 1 saw 95% of LTCH and RH residents fully immunized.

COVID-19 Vaccination Program

COVID-19 vaccinations were starting to be made available in January 2021 and OPH worked in lockstep with the City's Emergency Operations Centre, Provincial partners, the Vaccine Sequence Strategy Task Force and local hospital teams to prepare for the logistics, distribution, communication and outreach required for the successful implementation of Ottawa's COVID-19 vaccine program. A COVID-19 Vaccination Rollout plan was completed and approved by the Ministry at the end of January 2021.

The key goals of the program are to ensure that vaccine is distributed as efficiently as possible following the Ontario Provincial ethical framework and three-phased vaccine distribution plan. The ethical framework is based on the principals of stewardship, trust, equity and transparency and helps guide decisions to ensure equitable distribution. It also supports the goal of reducing the risk for people more severely impacted by COVID-19 in Ottawa.

Over the course of Quarter 1, multiple channels were developed for eligible Ottawa residents to access the vaccine, including through OPH community clinics, pop-up clinics in "hot spots" and high priority neighbourhoods, pharmacies and primary care settings. Mobile teams were also organized to bring vaccines to homebound residents and people living and working in congregate care settings, and hospital partners operated clinics for healthcare workers, some essential caregivers in congregate care settings, faith leaders, special education teachers and individuals with the highest-risk health conditions and their caregiver.

OPH became the first public health unit in Ontario to transport Pfizer outside of the hospital clinic and into the Perley-Rideau Veterans Care centre – the first long-term care home to vaccinate residents in our city.

Supporting communities at higher risk of COVID-19 to get vaccinated

OPH worked closely with community partners throughout Quarter 1 to advance engagement activities with a focus on building vaccine confidence, along with the work to promote COVID-wise practices. Some key examples of OPH's recently established Community Operations Branch and the Community Engagement Task Force efforts include:

- Partnering with community organizations to host public town halls in multiple languages, featuring the voices and perspectives of health professionals from diverse ethnocultural backgrounds. These town halls, held in Spanish, Arabic, Somali, English and French, have enabled a dialogue where OPH and partners have listened and addressed concerns from residents while highlighting credible sources of information to assist in building vaccine confidence. Feedback from these sessions continues to influence our planning, operations and engagement work. This has included shifting staffing to ensure employees with diverse language abilities are working at specific pop-ups to support residents in their first language; allocating additional accessible parking spaces and adapting processes to better support individuals living with disabilities; and learning new ways to share credible information with diverse audiences to help build vaccine confidence.
- Working with community partners and service providers, using a train-the-trainer model, to help build capacity to discuss vaccines with residents and help build vaccine confidence and support

people to access vaccines. This work is supported through a variety of resources such as FAQs, tips on talking about vaccines and a “Vaccine 101” presentation.

- Partnering with the Ottawa Disability Coalition and the City of Ottawa’s Accessibility Office to hold a COVID-19 forum for people with disabilities and recently published COVID-19 Resources in American Sign Language webpage that provides accurate, reliable and up-to-date COVID-19 resources to Ottawa’s Deaf and hard of hearing community. The webpage includes several instructional and informational videos in American Sign Language.
- With the announcement that Indigenous adults would be a phase one population in the Province of Ontario’s vaccine roll-out, in December 2020, OPH began working with Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health and Akausivik Inuit Family Health Team to plan for culturally safe access to COVID-19 vaccinations for First Nation, Inuit and Métis (FNIM) community members in Ottawa. Since mid-February, OPH has partnered with both Wabano and Akausivik to offer Indigenous-specific clinics. Through these partnerships, by the end of March 2021, approximately 5,000 first doses of the COVID-19 vaccine had been provided. OPH and partners are committed to ensuring that members of the FNIM community may access the vaccine as quickly and safely as possible.
- OPH is also partnering with the Ottawa Aboriginal Coalition’s Research Committee on a study to understand and document First Nation, Inuit and Métis people’s experience with COVID-19 from the perspectives of community members as well as Urban Indigenous service providers in Ottawa.

Official Plan

As members of the Official Plan team, in Quarter 1 OPH supported draft Official Plan consultations and engagement to inform revisions. In addition, OPH supported the City’s climate change vulnerability assessment, which began its external engagement.

Challenges

Ministry Direction

Adapting to the frequent guidance changes and complexity of pandemic response is challenging.

Staffing

With increasing pandemic and core operational demands, it is a challenge to balance the need for agility and moving highly skilled employees to where they are most needed in the organization, as well as ensuring team / employee continuity and capacity.

Behaviours

While resident immunization was a great success, LTCH staff immunization rates remained below the initial target set. OPH implemented strategies to reduce barriers to access and to address vaccine hesitancy among LTCH workers.

Vaccine acceptance/hesitancy is also a concern for some priority populations. Developing a vaccine hesitancy plan to increase public uptake is well underway but challenges remain.

Quarter 1 saw increased community spread in situations where effective enforcement measures already exist. Egregious violations of public health orders are addressed by enforcing existing measures and a coordinated enforcement approach to situations creating public health risk were employed and are required on an ongoing basis.



Goal 3 – Streamlining through digitization - Status, Highlights and Achievements

Q1 2021 Status

Highlights

Case and Contact Management System

In February, OPH formally launched the 'Phase 2 Full Adoption' of the provincial Case and Contact Management (CCM) system. The Ministry of Health was an active partner and engaged through weekly meetings to review the project status and provide solutions to project barriers.

Future CCM users (556 in total) were informed of project progress through a weekly blog, communications about training plans and weekly project status updates. Senior leaders supported the project with executive sponsorship, change management champions and an Advisory Group.

By the end of Quarter 1, all future state processes (40) were defined and tested. New operational reports and dashboards were developed, and Part 1 of a three-part training plan was launched with self-directed training for 550 staff.

COVaxON

In February, OPH became an Authorizing Organization for the use of the provincially mandated solution to support the administration of COVID-19 vaccinations in Ontario called COVaxON. Since that time, 5099 users have been onboarded to the system, including 1940 external users. This rapidly growing userbase is comprised of city staff administering COVID-19 vaccinations at mass immunization and neighbourhood clinics, as well as 56 community partner organizations such as community health centres, family health teams and primary care physicians' offices.

Onboarding and support processes have been established, in cooperation with OntarioMD, to ensure that COVID-19 vaccine administration can occur effectively, efficiently and securely as the COVID-19 vaccination campaign continues to mobilize.

Work is underway, through the Ministry of Health, to expand the functionality of COVaxON as well as the involvement of the community partner service delivery channel. OPH will continue to act as a regional hub for vaccine distribution, administration, onboarding and support, as per evolving provincial direction.

Challenges

While there was ever evolving program changes and new functionality being introduced in the CCM, a nimble approach and cross program engagement kept the project on track.

Rapidly expanding development and onboarding to both provincially mandated solutions has made it necessary to closely monitor our local privacy and security posture on a regular basis to ensure that adequate technical and procedural safeguards are in place.



Goal 4 – A healthy workplace and workforce - Status, Highlights and Achievements

Q1 2021 Status



Highlights

Employee Insight Sessions: 5 Employee Insight sessions were held to gain further insight into the Fall Employee Pulse results. Results from Employee Insight Sessions and the Fall Employee Pulse informed OPH's 2021 Wellness@Work (W@W) Action Plan.

Communication to Employees: A communication schedule was developed to ensure consistent updates from the W@W committee to all staff. Using a variety of communication channels (weekly emails from the Medical Officer of Health, the Daily Buzz, W@W emails, Town Halls, MyOPH) and based on staff feedback, resources and information were shared and included in the W@W Action Plan. Topics included:

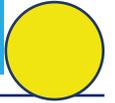
- Building and maintaining team spirit in a virtual environment
- Employee recognition
- Wellness and mental health
- Healthy eating and active living

City of Ottawa Spring Employee Pulse: The Spring Employee Pulse is a short employee wellness survey that provides an opportunity to check back on results shared in the fall and learn more about employees' experiences during this emergency response. The Wellness@Work committee works closely with City partners in the Innovative and Client Service Department on the development of this survey and to promote this engagement opportunity within OPH. Results will be available at the end of May 2021 and will be shared with OPH's Senior Leadership Team, incorporated into the W@W Action Plan and reported on in the next Board of Health report.

Leadership Tool Kit: Wellness@Work included a variety of wellness, mental health, employee recognition and team building resources in OPH's recently updated Leadership Toolkit, which was shared with OPH's Leaders in a virtual training session.

Challenges

The membership of the Wellness@Work committee has decreased due to increasing demands related to COVID-19. The COVID-19 response has led to a shift in work and higher employee demands, making employee wellness of utmost importance.



Goal 5 - Continuously improve our core work to maximize impact - Status, Highlights and Achievements

Q1 2021 Status

Quality Improvement Initiatives Undertaken

COVID-19

Process Improvements

- Migrated COVID-19 reporting from the COVID-19 Ottawa Database (COD) to CCM:
 - Performed extensive quality assurance work during migration to ensure data quality, integrity, accuracy and seamless reporting across the two platforms.
 - Created and validated new data extracts from CCM for local COVID-19 data analysis and reporting.
 - Rebuilt OPH's public facing dashboards (Daily Dashboard, Ward Map) in both official languages to ensure a seamless transition for the general public.
 - Re-built OPH's Open Ottawa datasets to match previous COD version and ensure a seamless transition for the general public.
- Introduced evidence-informed approaches to improving case and contact management.
- Improved data quality for variants of concern (VOC) and mutations of interest (MOI)
- Updated IPAC's institutional risk matrix for identifying high, medium, and low risk facilities (Long-Term Care Homes, Retirement Homes and Congregate settings).
- Established formal processes for requesting support from Regional IPAC Team (RIT) to ensure timely support provided to facilities.

Technology and Automation

- Created a virtual assistant/chat bot to help residents find information quickly on OPH's website.

- Automated internal epidemiological products.

Document Review and Training

- Case management conducted documentation audits to increase standardization of work across team members.
- Provided ongoing in-service sessions, training and daily reminders to ensure staff were kept up to date with the latest information.

Non-COVID-19

- Worked with the OPH Immunization team to get Ottawa area hospitals on-boarded with pre-positioned rabies post-exposure prophylaxis.
- Updated dental policies and procedures regarding work during the COVID-19 pandemic to meet the latest guidelines and recommendations. These documents were then reviewed with staff.
- Provided all dental staff with a refresher on donning and doffing of personal protective equipment.
- Reviewed Sexual Health Clinical Services intake and assessment forms using a trauma informed care lens (specific areas of focus included transgender inclusivity as well as screening for intimate partner violence and sexual assault).

Highlights

COVID-19

- Established a health system response framework, in partnership with numerous health partners, to strengthen the local response and decreased service gaps.
- Transitioned the Case Management team into a service area organization structure with defined reporting structures and formalized a Strategic Support Unit that engages in CQI activities.
 - Case Management also worked with federal and provincial workforces to increase capacity during surge periods and database migration.
- Developed a new vaccination dashboard
- Developed three new Special Focus Reports
 - Schools
 - LTCH
 - Mental Health
- Exceeded the Community Operations team's target for COVID-19 related interactions in priority

neighbourhoods.

- Provided resources and support to priority neighbourhoods through a variety of engagement strategies, including face-to-face outreach and presentations tailored to various audiences and languages.

Non-COVID-19

- The Healthy Growth and Development team conducted a client satisfaction survey in Quarter 1 of 2021.
- Dental clinics resumed essential, non-urgent dental care, such as fillings and root canal treatments, with the waitlist starting to decrease by end of quarter.

Challenges

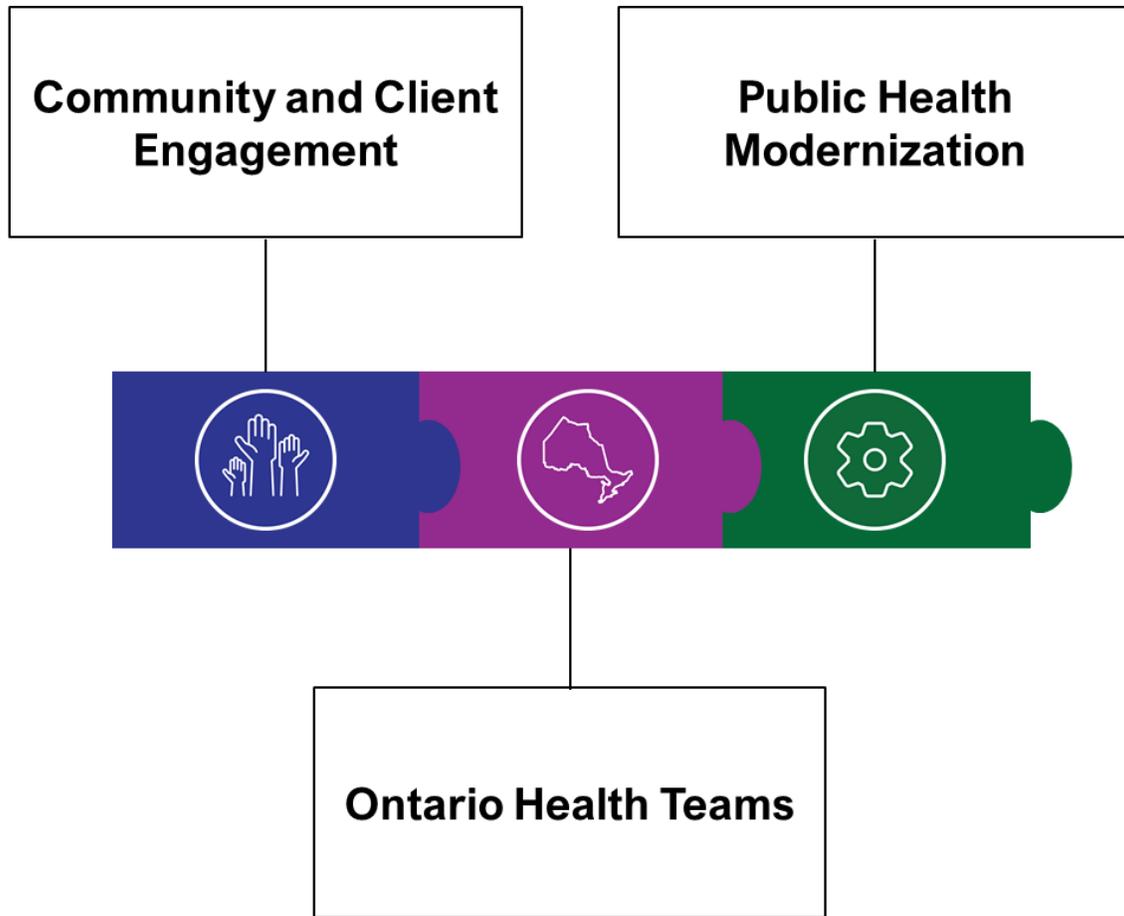
COVID-19

- Due to the surge in cases and outbreaks resulting from the third wave of the pandemic, there was a shift in case management and outbreak practice to meet the high case counts.
- Case Management encountered many staffing difficulties with the loss of experienced staff at all levels to COVID-19 Immunization and other OPH Core Services and a reliance on casual staff was an added challenge in CQI initiatives and transitioning to CCM. Training requirements increased significantly to accommodate inexperienced and casual staff.
- Demand for epidemiological input, products, and public inquiries continues to be high.
- Shifting restrictions due to COVID-19-related health measures made consistent face-to-face outreach more difficult (eg, could not plan sessions in person to talk about COVIDwise and vaccines, few opportunities to engage people outdoors during stay-at-home orders), and difficult to plan future activities.
- Shifting eligibility and vaccine supply concerns fostered a lot of uncertainty in the community, which was outside of the team's control and therefore difficult to counter.

Non-COVID-19

- Staffing for non-COVID programs and services is still limited due to the demands of the COVID-19 pandemic and vaccine response.

Transformational Initiatives





Community and Client Engagement - Highlights and Achievements

Projects/Initiatives Undertaken

Engagement

- Regular engagement with elected officials and various stakeholders to keep them informed about OPH's work and respond to questions and concerns
- Increase in requests for Drs Etches and Moloughney to participate in speaking engagements
- Engagement with a wide variety of audiences and through multiple channels to ensure residents and partners have the information and resources they need as relates to the local COVID-19 situation as well as generally with respect to public health programs and services
- Engagement with hospital partners in discussions regarding the pressures on the health care system to guide our key messages. We also stay connected with our hospital communications partners on media opportunities and messaging.
- Active engagement through our social media platforms to share public health messaging and regular updates on the pandemic response.

Client Satisfaction

- Completion of two client satisfaction surveys in 2020. Feedback collected helped shape the format of our media availabilities. We also received feedback regarding the work of other service areas, for example, praise for our epidemiology team.
- Positive comments were received about the team's responsiveness and ability to adapt to new ways of working.

Highlights

- In 2020, OPH processed over 2,700 media requests and participated in 80 media availabilities and 275 media interviews – far more than any other year.
- In Quarter 1 of 2021, media requests remained high with 930 media inquiries; 57 media interviews; 10 media availabilities.
- The Contact Centre launched a new phone system on March 12, 2021 which has resulted in over 100,000 calls and new efficiencies
 - Ability to request a call-back (requested by 11.5% of callers).
 - Added an interactive voice response (IVR) option for direct transfers to the province, starting on March 15th, which diverted 54,566 calls to the provincial booking line.
 - Due to changes in guidance, OPH called over 2,000 people to rebook their appointments to the new 105 days vaccine dose interval.
- In March 2021, the Business Engagement Program Support team facilitated a business stakeholder satisfaction survey. Satisfaction with the engagement and resources provided by OPH to implement COVID-19 prevention measures in the business community was high, with 86% of stakeholders stating their satisfaction.
- Regular touch points to clarify provincial regulatory requirements (e.g. does the 10-person maximum during the provincial shutdown include staff? Are buffet style meals permitted?) ~300 faith leader contacts

Challenges

- Dr Etches is receiving increased email and engagement requests requiring new processes to manage the volume.
- Increased focus on OPH has resulted in greater inquiries and demands for responses.
- Lack of a stakeholder database tool has limited and impacted work on stakeholder plans.
- Staffing challenges in some parts of the CCE team have limited what work could be completed.
- Additional resources would also serve to conduct further media evaluation reports and client satisfaction surveys. Current capacity is limited, and this work has been postponed for the time being.



Ontario Health Teams – Highlights and Achievements

Projects/Initiatives Undertaken

OPH continues to contribute to the work of four Ottawa-area OHTs:

- 1) Ottawa Health Team
- 2) Ottawa East OHT
- 3) Kids Come First Health Team
- 4) Four Rivers OHT (formerly Three Rivers; partners from neighbouring Kemptville and Lanark have joined to create Four Rivers)

Highlights

- The Ottawa Health Team continued its support for communities disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. Efforts have focused on neighbourhood engagement and outreach, targeted testing, supports for those facing barriers to isolation (referral program), and vaccine confidence. OPH's Community Operations Team has been heavily involved with this work. The collective effort is making a difference for families in our community, as highlighted in this [Ottawa Citizen article](#).
- Significant gains were made in Quarter 1 on the “One Call/One Click” initiative, led by the Kids Come First Health Team. This initiative will improve access to youth mental health care across the region.
- Four Rivers OHT was invited by the Ontario Ministry of Health to submit a Full Application. The next step in the OHT designation process - a virtual Ministry site visit - is expected to occur in Q2.
- As part of the Ottawa East OHT, the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO) Best Practice Spotlight Organization (BPSO), OPH's Healthy Growth & Development Team continued implementation of the Person and Family-Centred Care best practice guidelines (BPGs). Using BPGs ensures we are striving towards the best standard of care for our clients.

Challenges

Capacity of our leaders and subject matter experts to contribute to the various committees and work groups is overstretched due to pandemic response and vaccination efforts.



Public Health Modernization – Highlights and Achievements

Projects/Initiatives Undertaken

- OPH has continued to advocate for consistent and equitable investments in public health infrastructure and capacity, most recently through the following February Board of Health reports:
 - [COVID-19 Pandemic Response – Looking Ahead and Building Back Better](#)
 - [Lessons Learned Working with Long-Term Care Homes \(LTCHs\) During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)
- OPH has also continued to prioritize digital health technologies through implementing the provincial database that supports case and contact management.
- A critical component of OPH's on-going work in the area of public health modernization included strengthening and leveraging local, regional and provincial partnerships - collectively working towards common goals. For instance, in Quarter 4 2020 and Quarter 1 2021, OPH worked closely with many regional health and social partners to support the vaccine roll and to support a regional approach to IPAC and outbreak management, capitalizing on local public health expertise and connections at the regional level.

Highlights

- While the provincial government has not communicated its intention to resume consultations and/or planning regarding Public Health Modernization, OPH has sought to capitalize on the lessons learned from the pandemic, our new partnerships, new ways of working and reaching our community members by developing a Recovery Plan for OPH.
- OPH's Recovery Planning will build on OPH's submission to the provincial consultation on Public Health Modernization, as well as integrate lessons learned from the COVID-19 response. The plan will be informed by OPH employees, partners, the City of Ottawa's Recovery planning, as well as local data and evidence regarding health and social needs post-pandemic.

Challenges

- Currently, there are staffing and budgetary challenges with balancing recovery and COVID response work.
- On-going changes in provincial guidance (regarding re-opening, vaccine administration, etc) has resulted in challenges with communications and providing supports to Ottawa's community (e.g. schools, businesses, residents).