



Hamilton

INFORMATION REPORT

TO:	Mayor and Members Board of Health
COMMITTEE DATE:	January 16, 2023
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Board of Health Orientation Part 2: Population Health Assessment and Public Health Priorities (BOH23002) (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
PREPARED BY:	Ruth Sanderson (905) 546-2424 Ext. 4859 Nancy Sullivan (905) 546-2424 Ext. 5752
SUBMITTED BY:	Elizabeth Richardson, MD, MHSc, FRCPC Medical Officer of Health Public Health Services
SIGNATURE:	

COUNCIL DIRECTION

Not Applicable.

INFORMATION

As outlined in the first meeting of the Board of Health for this Council term, several presentations are being provided as part of a comprehensive orientation plan for new board members, and a continuing education program for all board members.

The first presentation (Report BOH22018) at the November 28, 2022 Board of Health provided an overview of board of health governance and accountability as per the relevant legislation and Ontario Public Health Standards (Standards), as well as the roles and responsibilities of Board of Health members. In the accompanying presentation to Board of Health Report BOH23002, members are provided with information on population health assessment, health equity and how these concepts are used to identify the population health needs for Hamilton and priorities for Public Health Services. The following provides a brief overview of the information included in the presentation.

OUR Vision: To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully.

OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.

The Standards require Boards of Health to improve population health and reduce health inequities.¹ To achieve this, Public Health Services provides a broad range of programs and services in the areas of chronic disease prevention, mental health and well-being, substance use and injury prevention, school health, healthy growth and development, healthy environments, food and water safety, immunization and infectious disease prevention and control. Population health assessment and health equity are considered foundational to the work of public health, which means that they underlie and support all programs and services.

What is Population Health Assessment?

When individuals seek medical care, a physician or clinician will often ask several questions to assess their health. Public Health professionals use a similar approach; however, instead of focusing on individuals, we assess the overall health of a community or segments of it. Measuring population health produces important information about emerging health issues, health inequities and priority populations that informs program planning and decision-making. This includes the identification of public health priorities that require targeted investment of resources in order to have the greatest impact on the health of our population. The process of measuring the health of the population and using the information to inform action is known as population health assessment.

What is Health Equity?

Health is influenced by a broad range of factors. It is estimated that 50% of our health is determined by social and economic determinants. These are factors beyond our biology, behaviours, and lifestyle choices, including: gender, ethnicity, income, education, stable housing, and social networks. Health equity means that all people can attain their full health potential and are not disadvantaged from attaining it due to social position or other socially determined circumstance.¹ Conversely, health inequities are avoidable or modifiable differences in the health status between groups caused by socially determined circumstances. Health inequities are typically systematic – that is, beyond our individual control – and unfair.²

Public health has an important role to play in achieving health equity. The Standards require boards of health to identify local health inequities, share this information with partners, and collaborate with others to work on strategies to reduce health inequities in

¹ Ministry of Health (2021). Ontario Public Health Standards: Requirements for Programs, Services and Accountability.

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/oph_standards/

² Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH) of Ontario. Improving the Odds: Championing Health Equity in Ontario (2018).

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/ministry/publications/reports/cmoh_18/default.aspx

our community.¹ Public health cannot eliminate health inequities alone and must work with other local partners.^{2,3}

How do we use this information to identify priorities?

Population health assessment, including a comprehensive understanding of health inequities, allows Public Health Services to identify the population health needs of the Hamilton community. Population health needs are typically longstanding issues that require many years and collective action by multiple partners and at multiple levels to address; public health is one of many contributors. Public Health Services contributes to addressing local population health needs by:

1. Using the information to prioritize and adapt public health programs and services; and,
2. Sharing information with the board of health, community and healthcare partners, and the public to inform and influence local collective action.

Public Health Services has identified four priority population health needs for the Hamilton community:

- Child and youth healthy growth and development;
- Climate change;
- Health equity; and,
- Mental health and substance use.

These are not new to Hamilton. In fact, the health issues and inequities associated with them have worsened through the COVID-19 pandemic. To contribute to collective action, Public Health Services has identified public health specific actions that will be implemented to adapt and improve existing programs and services to address these population health needs. Although focused planning and resourcing is required to move the needle on these priority population health needs, it is important to note that this does not negate the importance of public health's other mandated work. Public Health Services will continue to carry out all of its important programs and services.

Detailed information on Public Health Services' population health assessment process and results, Hamilton's population health needs, and specific public health actions are provided in the accompanying presentation.

³ Chief Medical Officer of Health of Canada. From risk to resilience: An equity approach to COVID-19 (2020). <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/corporate/publications/chief-public-health-officer-reports-state-public-health-canada/from-risk-resilience-equity-approach-covid-19.html>

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Not Applicable.