

## CITY OF HAMILTON

### *PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES Family Health Division*

<b>TO:</b> Mayor and Members Board of Health	<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b> CITY WIDE
<b>COMMITTEE DATE:</b> June 27, 2011	
<b>SUBJECT/REPORT NO:</b> On-line Prenatal Education Program (BOH11021) (City Wide)	
<b>SUBMITTED BY:</b> Elizabeth Richardson, MD, MHSc, FRCPC Medical Officer of Health Public Health Services	<b>PREPARED BY:</b> Debbie Sheehan (905) 546-2424 x 4888 Joanna Heerlein (905) 546-2424 x 3559
<b>SIGNATURE:</b>	

### RECOMMENDATION

- (a) That Council endorse the provision of a new on-line prenatal education program which will be offered as an additional alternative to face-to-face classes,
- (b) That Council approve Public Health Services On-line Prenatal Program fee of \$25.00 per user, effective July 1, 2011.
- (c) That Council approve Public health Services On-line Prenatal program fee of \$25.00 per user to be added to the City of Hamilton User Fees and Charges By-Law.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Every year, Public Health Services turns away over 100 couples from prenatal classes due to lack of space in existing in-person courses. On-line (web-based) prenatal education offers pregnant women and their partners an alternative to in-person classes. This approach is designed to meet the needs of clients who prefer on-line learning or cannot attend conventional childbirth classes due to bed-rest, scheduling conflicts, or time constraints. This interactive, web-based program includes animated illustrations, videos, voice-overs and games. Parents-to-be can access the on-line prenatal education from the comfort of their own home at times that are convenient for them.

All pregnant women will be offered the option of attending in-person classes or the on-line program. Clients choosing to access the on-line program must attend an introductory orientation group session (offered twice per month) during which a Public Health Nurse (PHN) explains how the program works and ensures clients know how to contact a PHN if they have additional learning needs. Clients then receive their individual access code for the program. The on-line program also provides two optional sessions for participants to meet with a PHN to practice hands-on skills and get additional support related to preparation for childbirth and breastfeeding. Clients will be charged a \$25.00 user fee. If there is a financial hardship, access will be made available at no cost. Clients who choose to take prenatal in-person classes will continue to pay a \$91.00 user fee to cover the cost.

**Alternatives for Consideration** - See Page 5

<b>FINANCIAL / STAFFING / LEGAL IMPLICATIONS</b> (for Recommendation(s) only)
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**Financial:**

User fees have been collected for adult prenatal education over the past 14 years. These fees are charged to offset the expenses incurred in delivering classes related to preparation for childbirth (non-mandatory component of the curriculum). The current fee is \$91.00. Hamilton has an average of 5,500 live births per year. Based on the uptake from Peel Health Unit who has used this program, we would predict that 5% of expectant couples ( $5,500 \times .05 = 275$ ) would access on-line prenatal classes.

Estimated Annual Cost of the On-line Prenatal Program		
Item	Cost	Annual Cost
Annual license	\$1,500.00	\$ 1,500.00
Access Codes	275 clients x \$25	\$ 6,875.00
PHN time (refer to next table)		\$ 6,650.00
Total Cost		\$ 15,025.00
Cost per client		\$ 54.64

**Staffing:**

Sessions	How often class offered	Cost
Introductory session: 1 hour class to give clients access codes and information on community resources.	Class offered twice per month x 1 hour (includes PHN hours and mileage)	\$ 1,824.00
Optional sessions: 1. Preparation for delivery class 2. Breastfeeding class	Each class offered once per month x 3.5 hours (2 hour class plus 1.5 hour prep and set up/take down) (includes PHN time and mileage)	\$ 4,826.00
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$ 6,650.00</b>

**Legal:**

The provision of prenatal education is mandated by the Ministry of Health and Long-term Care (MOH-LTC) under the Reproductive component of the Ontario Public Health Standards. Public Health Units must ensure that the service is as accessible as possible.

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND** (Chronology of events)

The Reproductive Health Program within Public Health Services identified the need to have a continuum of options for families to access prenatal health education. Currently prenatal health education is offered primarily through group education classes (a series of 8 evening classes or 3 consolidated classes on Saturdays). As population diversity continues to increase in the City of Hamilton, new approaches and venues are needed to reach families at this critical period of child development. Recommendations from the effectiveness literature indicate that on-line learning can be as effective as face-to-face and a combination of face-to-face with on-line learning demonstrated the most effective behaviour change.

Currently 630 prenatal women and their partners access PHS prenatal classes. Approximately half of the total birth cohorts (5,500) are first time mothers which equals 2,750 women. Therefore only approximately 23% of first pregnant women are accessing prenatal classes. This is a similar trend across the province. Providing the option of an interactive on-line prenatal program will expand the reach of the City of Hamilton Public Health Services prenatal education to a diverse population that is computer savvy. In 2009, 78% of Ontario households reported having "home internet access". As of 2009, internet access continues to grow at an increasing rate, thus expecting a 90% or higher internet access by 2012.

PHS explored several options and decided on “The Gift of Motherhood” on-line prenatal program, as it is aligned with the current curriculum used in adult prenatal classes and the Baby Friendly (Breastfeeding) Initiative (BFI). The “Gift of Motherhood” program has been successfully implemented in Peel Health Unit. Their experience was that with the offering of on-line classes as an alternative to in-person classes, there was no decline in demand for in-person classes suggesting that on-line classes are meeting the needs of a different group of pregnant women and their partners. Preliminary evaluation data from Peel Health Unit indicate that 91% of the participants reported increased knowledge and 98% found the content easy to understand. Participants specifically identified that the program had visual appeal, was easy to access and use, and had the right amount of information. They also found that the information provided through the features such as quizzes, videos, and factsheets were helpful.

### **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

The Ontario Public Health Standards (OPHS) for Reproductive Health focus on healthy pregnancy, breastfeeding and preparation for parenting and do not include childbirth preparation. Approximately 80% of the content of the on-line prenatal education program meets the OPHS and 20% of the content does not. The content related to preparation for childbirth has been identified by clients as the part of the curriculum they value the most but is not mandated and is provided by PHS.

PHS currently charges a \$91.00 user fee for in-person adult prenatal classes to cover the cost of the non-mandatory component of the curriculum. The fee is waived or reduced if there is a financial hardship. This same policy would be observed for on-line classes.

### **RELEVANT CONSULTATION**

The manager and staff of Finance and Administration (F&A) were consulted to ensure the data was accurate and to give guidance on appropriate presentation of financial figures.

### **ANALYSIS / RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION**

(include Performance Measurement/Benchmarking Data, if applicable)

The provision of prenatal education to expectant couples is directly aligned with Council priorities and identified community needs:

- Making Hamilton the Best Place to Raise a Child
- The Priority Plan (prosperity, human capital)

Hamilton has an average of 5,500 live births per year, and approximately 5.4% of women in Hamilton are pregnant in the given year (Hamilton PHacts, 2008). The total number of prenatal registrants in 2010 was 630 (9% of expectant mothers). PHS provides approximately 53 adult prenatal series (495 attendees), 6 singles series (85 attendees),

and 3 teen series (50 attendees) per year. 126 couples were turned away due to lack of space in the upcoming classes before their birth due date. In these cases, clients are calling in their last trimester and are unable to fit in a conventional class. This problem could largely be eliminated through the use of on-line classes.

**Next Steps:**

July - October

- Promotion campaign focused on all PHS prenatal education programs.<sup>1</sup>
- Launch the on-line prenatal program as a pilot.
- Offer the option of the on-line prenatal program to all registrants for prenatal classes.
- Closely monitor the effects of the on-line prenatal program on attendance at in-person classes.

November:

- Evaluate uptake of the on-line prenatal program
- Make adjustments necessary to improve the prenatal program
- Determine budget implications for 2012 based on actual number of clients accessing on-line versus in-person classes

**ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION**

(include Financial, Staffing, Legal and Policy Implications and pros and cons for each alternative)

The Board of Health could direct PHS to:

1. Offer the on-line prenatal program without charging the clients a user fee. This would result in a budget pressure of \$15,025.00 per year.

**CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN (Linkage to Desired End Results)**

Focus Areas: 1. Skilled, Innovative and Respectful Organization, 2. Financial Sustainability, 3. Intergovernmental Relationships, 4. Growing Our Economy, 5. Social Development, 6. Environmental Stewardship, 7. Healthy Community

***Skilled, Innovative & Respectful Organization***

- ♦ More innovation, greater teamwork, better client focus

***Intergovernmental Relationships***

- ♦ Maintain effective relationships with other public agencies
- ♦ Delivery of municipal services and management capital assets/liabilities in a sustainable, innovative and cost effective manner

<sup>1</sup> Cost of the promotion campaign was budgeted for in 2011 Reproduction Health Program budget.

***Growing Our Economy***

- ♦ An improved customer service

***Social Development***

- ♦ Residents in need have access to adequate support services

<b>APPENDICES / SCHEDULES</b>
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Not applicable.