

TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

FROM: Christopher Mackie, Medical Officer of Health

DATE: 2013 November 21

MIDDLESEX COUNTY: IMPACT OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHANGES ON HUMAN SERVICE NEEDS

Recommendation

It is recommended that Report No. 126-13 re Middlesex County: Impact of Social and Economic Changes on Human Service Needs be received for information.

Key Points

- Where one lives has the potential to impact health. As such, children and their families living in county settings, such as Middlesex County, may experience both benefits and challenges that are associated with rural living.
- Residents and communities of Middlesex County are facing significant changes in demographics, economics and services.
- Barriers to relevant and reliable resources are experienced by some Middlesex County residents.
- The Health Unit is committed to identifying and responding to the emerging needs of Middlesex County residents.

Background

A priority of [Ontario's Action Plan for Health Care](#) is to keep Ontario healthy. However, as many reports and other notable sources have demonstrated, Ontarians live in many different economic, social and physical environments, some of which are healthier than others.

The [Middlesex County: Impact of Social & Economic Changes on Human Service Needs Report](#) (See [Appendix A](#) for the Executive Summary), prepared by United Way London & Middlesex and funded by Employment Ontario, provides insight into this. The purpose of the Report is to identify assets, needs and gaps experienced by Middlesex County communities, and to make recommendations for further actions related to human service needs. As such, a detailed overview of the outcomes of a needs assessment that was conducted within Middlesex County from May 2012 to May 2013 is included in the full report. The Health Unit participated on the planning committee which led to this report.

As a result of the various communities' abilities to gain access to and participate in the needs assessment, varying degrees of information for each geographic area within Middlesex County appear within the Report. Regardless of the level of individual regional detail, an over-arching theme is that both the physical and mental health of Middlesex County residents and their need for service are impacted by the social determinants of health. This in turn impacts the well-being of these residents and their need for services.

Recommendations from the Report

The Report outlines four key recommendations which address aspects of service development and rural-specific issues, such as access and transportation limitations. The recommendations demonstrate a need for 'action' and 'planning' in the following areas:

- Integration & Development
 - Functional re-design of resource centres
 - Cost sharing and coordination for greater efficiencies and effectiveness
 - Advertising and communication
 - Representation and governance
 - Further exploration of Aboriginal issues
 - Priority service areas, including: addictions, mental health, violence, and unemployment
- Access
 - Addressing distance to services/transportation
 - Alternate modes of service delivery and communication considerations
 - Hours of operation and client-centredness
- Development of Social Capital
 - Community and political leadership skills development
 - Voluntarism skills and engagement
 - Training and education opportunities
- Community and Strategic Leadership
 - Leadership and coordination
 - Funding considerations
 - Technical expertise and consulting
 - Enhanced coordination of services and/or resources

Conclusion/Next Steps

The Health Unit is committed to working with the County of Middlesex and other key stakeholders in the identification of emerging needs, opportunities, and implementation of effective strategies.

Additional considerations for the Health Unit as it moves forward may include working with the County of Middlesex and key stakeholders to:

- Identify additional opportunities to increase awareness, communication, cooperation and collaboration among service providers in order to link families to appropriate service
- Identify and reduce barriers that may interfere with the ability of county residents to access current and future resources in their communities.
- Continue to consider all relevant aspects of the Social Determinants of Health when planning, implementing and evaluating programming made available to residents who reside within Middlesex County.

This report was prepared by Ms. Deb Fenlon, Public Health Nurse, and Ms. Diane Bewick, Director, Family Health Services.



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This report addresses the following requirement(s) of the Ontario Public Health Standards: Foundational Standard.