

TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

FROM: Christopher Mackie, Medical Officer of Health / CEO

DATE: 2019 May 16

COMMUNITY HEALTH STATUS RESOURCE STRATEGIC PROJECT UPDATE

Recommendation

It is recommended that Report No. 037-19 re: “Community Health Status Resource Strategic Project Update” be received for information.

Key Points

- As part of the Ontario Public Health Population Health Assessment Standard, boards of health are required to assess and share information externally on the current health status of the local population and subpopulations in order to inform planning of interventions that are responsive to residents’ needs.
- The Middlesex-London Health Unit meets these requirements, in part, through its on-line [Community Health Status Resource](#).
- Approximately half of the Resource’s content has been recently updated and internal processes are being strengthened to ensure ongoing sustainability.
- The Health Unit is uniquely positioned to support our community health partners via our expertise in population health assessment.

Background

Population health assessment is a core function of the public health system and a first step in planning community health programs and services that are responsive to residents’ needs. It considers the health of populations and subgroups, and looks at the circumstances that affect residents’ health, such as where they live, their level of education, and their income.

As part of the Ontario Public Health Population Health Assessment Standard, boards of health are required to assess current health status, health behaviours, preventive health practices, risk and protective factors, health care utilization relevant to public health, and demographic indicators, including the assessment of trends and changes. Boards of health must also provide this population health information to the public, community partners, and other health care providers so that they are aware of relevant and current population health information.

The Health Unit meets these population health assessment requirements, in part, through its online [Community Health Status Resource](#). The Resource was launched in 2012 and is being enhanced through a 2018–19 strategic project. The project involves both updating the content of the Resource and embedding practices that will support routine, ongoing updating to ensure the health indicators remain relevant and the information is up-to-date.

Current Project Status

Updates have been published for half of the more-than-seventy health indicators in the Resource. Completed topics include: [geography & demographics](#), [social determinants of health](#) (e.g., education, income, housing), [injury](#), [substance use](#), [immunization](#), [healthy pregnancy](#), [birth and early development](#), and [urban Indigenous health](#).

Enhancements include:

- Augmenting our assessment of health inequities, where the data permits, by rural/urban status, education, income, and employment status.
- Partnering with the Southwest Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Centre to include data from Our Health Counts London in the Resource (and thereby carrying out a recommendation for inclusion within our organizational plan for reconciliation).
- Increasing interpretation of findings to focus the reader on the meaning of the results.
- Including aggregated data tables to support the community's use of population health data.

Next Steps

Additional topics will be completed by mid-summer, including: general health, behavioural risk factors (e.g., healthy eating, physical activity, sleep), and infectious disease. Future areas of development in the fall will include: child and youth health, chronic disease, healthy environments, and oral health. Approaches to enhance ongoing updating are being documented and considered. Promotion of the Resource to key community partners is also being considered to ensure that partners are aware of this information and integrate it into their planning.

Conclusion

Through population health assessment initiatives such as the Community Health Status Resource, the Middlesex-London Health Unit is uniquely positioned within the local health system to identify groups whose health is at risk and to help identify health system priorities to support the overall health and wellbeing of the whole population.

This report was prepared by the Population Health Assessment and Surveillance Team, Office of the Medical Officer of Health.



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