

Central Zone Nova Scotia Health & IWK Health Centre

Community Report Back- Fall 2023

We are pleased to share the following response from our colleagues at Nova Scotia Health (NSH) and IWK Health Centre (IWK) that highlights the actions and activities that various facilities, departments and programs in Central Zone have undertaken to action recommendations from the 2019-2023 Community Health Plan. We thank them for their continued support, commitment and collaboration with the Central Zone Community Health Boards and staff.

PRIORITY: EQUITABLE ACCESS TO HEALTH SERVICES AND INFORMATION

Recommendation # 1: Seek creative, innovative ways to reduce barriers and increase access to services in the community.

- Public Health has increased access or removed barriers to our services with individuals and community partners. For example: 1) Public Health's Immunization program expanded our immunization clinics offerings for clients without a primary care provider (i.e., routine childhood immunizations) or MSI coverage (i.e., joint clinics with partners such as Immigrant Settlement Association of NS (ISANS) and Newcomer Health), and 2) Public Health's Early Years program removed barriers for the Enhanced Home Visiting Program, offered to vulnerable moms and babies.
- Dartmouth General Hospital has been working to provide more services, reduce accessibility barriers, host community conversations, offer drive thru services, introduce orthopedic robot, implement surgical short stay beds, and opened a third endoscopy room for patients of the Nova Scotia Colon Cancer Prevention Program.
- Vascular surgery has created an educational video on post-op surgery medications.
- Community Health Teams are offering free services and navigation in community, offering at different times of the day, transitioning to a universal accessible flyer, and working with groups who have difficulty access services.
- Mental Health & Addictions developed and offered Substance Use Disorder Support Education in workplaces and community.
- Tri-facilities (located in Eastern Shore Musquodoboit CHB area) staff has supported the creation of a community led Well-being HUB initiative that improves access to local resources and information.
- Virtual Care NS has increased access to primary care providers through online appointments for everyone on the Need a Family Practice Registry.
- Primary Care is working to increase access to healthcare through Mobile Primary Care Clinics, Community Pharmacist program and by strengthen and establishing 14 new team-based primary care teams in Central Zone.

- Continuing Care implemented the “Expanded Home First program”, in collaboration with Department of Seniors and Long-term Care, which offers funding for clients to purchase private home support in areas where there are waitlists for government contracted agency services.
- Cobequid Community Health Centre is improving access by providing some services on evenings and weekends and offering space to host Primary Care weekend and holiday clinics.

Recommendation # 2: Develop a more culturally competent health system.

- Public Health managers have implemented recruitment strategies to support a more culturally diverse team.
- Dartmouth General Hospital hosted a job fair for people of African descent, sponsored staff to attend International Black Health Conference, created the African NS Healthcare bursary program and in collaboration with Dalhousie will provide health career preparation and support to youth from African NS/Canadian communities.
- Diagnostic Imaging and other departments have created Equity, Diversity and Inclusion teams/committees to foster an equitable, diverse and inclusive environment through continuous and active engagement and education.
- Community Health Teams have a Diversity & Inclusion committee that meets monthly, participated in trauma informed care, use land acknowledgements, and have offered programs in partnership with translation services.
- Mental Health & Addictions is collaborating with partners to create the Affirming Care conference.
- After consulting with Acadian and francophone community members about challenges in accessing home & community care, Continuing Care developed a learning module for staff.
- Inter professional collaborative care in partnership with the Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS), the Halifax Refugee Clinic and the Newcomer Health Clinic to offer Home Care supports and interpretive services to newcomers and refugees.
- IWK was successful in hosting a Government of Canada Canadian Heritage funded project under the Anti Racism Action Program. This project supported diversifying the IWK workforce and reducing barriers for Black and African Nova Scotians and Indigenous people regarding employment within the health system.

PRIORITY: WORKING TOGETHER UPSTREAM

Recommendation # 3: Take the lead in working collaboratively with provincial departments, municipal governments, and community partners to address the social determinants of health.

- Community Health Teams are very aware of the social determinants of health and stay connected to the community to ensure their services are reflective of the overall needs of the client.
- Mental Health & Addictions works with partners to support education, build capacity and advocate for policies on key issues impacting the social determinants of health such as housing, alcohol policy, and the vaping flavour ban.
- Nova Scotia Health and CHBs work together in community to discuss, advocate and action the social determinants of health through community coalitions and the Well-Being HUB.

- Central Zone Public Health supports a variety of work that is focused on the social determinants of health by surveilling municipal actions, supporting public engagement, offering best practice advice, gathering and sharing data, helping to create effective policies and supporting communities in their efforts for change. For example: 1) Public Health’s Healthy Communities program provided input into HRM’s Complete Streets initiative to support healthy built environments, and 2) Public Health’s Healthy Communities program worked with education (Halifax Regional Centre for Education (HRCE) and Conseil Scolaire Acadien provincial (CSAP) and community partners to implement the Health Promoting Schools (HPS) model in high schools, through the work of Youth Health Centres. The HPS approach seeks to enhance school culture and reduce the impacts of health inequities to support positive health and learning outcomes for all youth.
- Continuing Care worked with Public Health to deliver in-home COVID-19 testing and vaccinations for those who could not access local clinics.
- IWK Mental Health and Addictions Health Promoters work with community organizations, partners, and internal health system folks to further the understanding of the social determinants of mental health (access to economic resources, freedom from discrimination and violence, and social inclusion) and how they have enormous impact on the health of children, youth, and families.

Recommendation # 4: Work with community stakeholders, academia, municipalities, and provincial departments to support and develop strategies to ensure equitable access to safe foods.

- Public Health works closely with multiple partners to develop and implement strategies to ensure equitable access to safe foods. For example: 1) Central Zone Public Health is a lead partner at the Halifax Food Policy Alliance and the JustFOOD Action Plan for HRM, and 2) Public Health continues to support the implementation of the *Standards for Food and Nutrition in Regulated Child Care Settings* and the *Food and Nutrition Policy for Nova Scotia Public Schools* through resource development, capacity building, and supporting access to safe and nutritious foods.
- Community Health Teams support committee work in the community on food insecurity, offer recipes for common food bank items and help navigate clients to free/low-cost food options.
- Mental Health & Addictions project, *East Coast Kitchen Party*, focuses on increasing access to food for 2SLGBTQIA+ newcomers.
- Collaborated with partners to implement a meal delivery program.
- IWK endorsed the Coalition for Healthy School Food.

PRIORITY: WELLNESS AND HEALTH PROMOTION

Recommendation # 5: Support community-based physical activity opportunities.

- Central Zone Public Health provides advice and support on a variety of active transportation projects, and champions projects that make it easier for people to choose active transportation. For example: 1) Public Health’s Healthy Communities program is facilitating active travel for Nova Scotia Health (NSH) employees (e.g., installing new bike racks at NSH facilities and EPass discounted transit pass).
- Dartmouth General Hospital is securing bike lockers and investing in a staff gym.
- Partnering with community sportsplex to offer rehab programming.

- Community Health Teams offer free physical activity programs, help navigate clients to local programs, and work with groups to build capacity in community to offer physical activity programs.
- Mental Health & Addictions advocates for year-round park space through the lens of mental wellness & physical activity.

Recommendation # 6: Invest in local and culturally appropriate programs that support mental wellness.

- Public Health's Youth Health Centre Coordinators in Central Zone support mental wellness in schools through their broad range of services, from individual level support for youth (e.g., resilience, coping & problem solving) to upstream youth-led health promoting approaches.
- Dartmouth General Hospital has a new ER Mental Health Initiative to offer new training for mental health and addictions and an African NS Decent Affinity program to provide support for ANS staff.
- Community Health Teams offer a variety of mental wellness programs that consider diversity needs including translation.
- Mental Health & Addictions' (MH&A) *East Coast Kitchen Party* is reducing social isolation among 2SLGBTQIA+ newcomers.
- MH&A has supported junior high and high schools to consult on preventing or responding to student drug use and fostering environments that strengthen mental wellness.
- Nova Scotia Health and Eastern Shore Musquodoboit CHB work together on mental health initiatives and the Well-being HUB as a mechanism to improve mental wellness programming and supports in the community.
- IWK hired a project manager for its African Nova Scotian Mental Health and Addictions Service and expanded the Indigenous Patient Navigation support program.

PRIORITY: SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY

Recommendation # 7: Invest in community-led health promotion initiatives.

- Public Health has been supporting CHBs by participating in their health planning process. Healthy Communities program team members have quarterly meetings with CHB coordinators to discuss opportunities for alignment and collaboration.
- Community Health Teams build community capacity by supporting the creation of walking groups for non-profit organizations and provide space for free to community organizations delivering health promoting initiatives.
- Mental Health & Addictions (MH&A) Health Promoters offer capacity building and leadership support to Injury Free Nova Scotia and Smoke Free Nova Scotia.
- MH&A facilitated the creation of a vaping report card for the Cobequid CHB. These resources provided the board with an opportunity to reflect on vaping in their community and potential pieces of advocacy moving forward.

Recommendation # 8: Support and partner with communities, non-profit and other sectors to engage individuals to build a sense of belonging and foster inclusion.

- Public Health aims to foster inclusion and remove stigma across all our program areas. For example: 1) Public Health's Early Years program has updated the Loving Care resources (given to all new birthing parents province-wide) to use more inclusive language reflecting diverse families, and 2) Public Health's Youth Health Coordinator at Citadel High School worked with the men's hockey team to address homophobic remarks and promote inclusion of LGBTQ+ players.
- Dartmouth General Hospital has developed a committee for African NS Health promotion including many community partners.
- One of the Community Health Teams' three pillars is community connection. They work together with community partners to learn more about each other and the community and use this knowledge to help clients navigate to programs and supports in their community as many people are looking for a sense of belonging.
- Mental Health & Addictions' (MH&A) *East Coast Kitchen Party* is reducing social isolation among 2SLGBTQIA+ newcomers. MH&A collaborated with community members to facilitate four community conversations on Heavy Unsanctioned Drinking Events (HUD-E). MH&A hosted a knowledge sharing in partnership which promoted mental wellness through programming that offers safe spaces to allow those identifying as "guys" to discuss the pressures of masculinity, break down cultural norms and provide strategies for mental wellness.
- Tri-facilities (located in Eastern Shore Musquodoboit CHB area) works to create community inclusion in decision making through the Sheet Harbour Community Advisory Committee and engagement through bi-annual community conversations.
- Continuing Care's collaborative partnership with Shelter Nova Scotia and Bayshore to service clients at 100 Herring Cove Road - an accepted environment for clients with active ETOH consumption and cluster care model with consistent provider and care coordinator. Also, a consistent care coordinator also manages referrals from other Halifax shelters, building success in relationships and networking with community partners.

We'd like to thank the following facilities, departments and programs for their input; Public Health, Community Health Teams, Dartmouth General Hospital, Tri-Facilities - Eastern Shore Musquodoboit Valley, Continuing Care, Diagnostic Imaging, Primary Care, Cobequid Community Health Centre, Virtual Care Nova Scotia, Mental Health & Addictions, Izaak Walton Killiam Health Centre, and Vascular Surgery.

To learn more about Community Health Boards and their health planning engagement process visit engageCHBs.ca