

Highlights and Implications for Region of Waterloo Public Health

Emergency Preparedness is a new program standard. The intent of the new standard is to ensure that Ontario's Public Health units and their boards of health have an effective and consistent response to public health emergencies and emergencies with public health impacts. Key requirements for this standard are given under the topic areas of:

- emergency planning
- risk communications and public awareness
- education, training, and exercises

The Emergency Preparedness Protocol explains how the requirements in this standard are to be met.

This new standard aligns well with local program evolution, as Region of Waterloo Public Health has created and filled a new position, Public Health Emergency Coordinator, who is spearheading the following initiatives:

- establishing an Emergency Planning Committee with representation from all Public Health program areas
- developing an Emergency Planning Steering Committee and an ensuing plan maintenance and approval process
- conducting a complete review of the existing Public Health Emergency Plan
- initiating a Public Health emergency sub-plan inventory and maintenance process
- identification of key staff emergency roles and training requirements



For more information, please contact Region of Waterloo Public Health, Health Determinants, Planning and Evaluation Program 519-883-2004.

Health Hazard Prevention and Management has been identified as a new goal area under the Environmental Health Standard. This recognizes the important and evolving role public health plays in preventing or reducing the burden of illness from chemical and physical factors in the environment that pose a human health risk. The Identification, Investigation and Management of Health Hazards Protocol provides direction to boards of health on the delivery of comprehensive, local health hazard prevention and management programs. There are currently four major operational roles and responsibilities identified in this protocol:

- Hazard Identification and Surveillance
- Hazard Investigation
- Health Hazard Prevention and Management and Reporting

In addition, there are two other key protocols that affect the Health Hazard Prevention and Management Standard: Risk Assessment and Inspection of Facilities Protocol and the Public Health Emergency Preparedness Protocol.

The Health Hazard Program will need to be redeveloped to ensure that all of the requirements stipulated under the standards and protocols are fully met. Given the detail of the new standards/protocols and program changes, it is expected that program development will continue to occur over the next few years. Public Health has been developing relationships with the public and community partners to increase awareness of health hazard incidents, risks, and preventative activities.

Region of Waterloo
Public Health



Ontario Public Health Standards Replacing 1997 Mandatory Health Programs and Services Guidelines

The Ministry of Health and Long Term Care is reviewing the Mandatory Health Programs and Services Guidelines (MHPSG) as part of an overall strategy to rebuild public health capacity within the province. The MHPSG will be replaced by Ontario Public Health Standards. Like the old guidelines, the new standards describe the minimum level of public health services and programs that a Board of Health must ensure or provide in their community. Boards of Health are still expected to respond to local public health needs, in addition to meeting the minimum standard requirements. Protocols are supporting documents to the Standards which provide direction on how to operationalize the specific requirements and will improve the standardization of Public Health programs and services across the province.

Review Process and Timelines

The MHPSG review process was guided by a Technical Review Committee which included stakeholders and Ministry staff from all three Ministries that fund Public Health (Health and Long Term Care, Health Promotion, and Children and Youth Services). This Committee provided advice to the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

- Sept 2006: Technical Review Committee established

- April 2007: Draft OPHS submitted to government and approval was given to proceed with consultation
- April 2007: Public Health units provided feedback on draft OPHS
- Sept 2007: Writing teams draft 28 Protocols to accompany Standards
- February – April 2008: Draft protocols reviewed by Public Health units
- Summer 2008: Protocols submitted for Ministerial approval
- January 2009: OPHS implementation target date

Region of Waterloo Public Health staff invited to participate on the protocol writing teams include:

- Ken Diplock and Peter Heywood - *Food Safety Protocol*
- Naideen Bailey - *Infection Prevention and Control Protocols*
- Karen Verhoeve - *Sexual Health and Sexually Transmitted Infections Protocol*
- Lesley Rintche and Hsiu Li Wang - *Enforcing Legislation related to Immunization Protocol*
- Daniela Seskar-Hencic - *Public Health Assessment and Surveillance Protocol*
- Pat Vanderkoy - *Nutritious Food Basket Protocol*

This was a great opportunity for Regional staff to contribute to provincial policy.

Structure of the New Ontario Public Health Standards

Figure 1 illustrates the organization of the new Ontario Public Health Standards. The new standards indicate that the work of Public Health should be guided by the key principles of Need, Impact, Capacity, and Partnership & Collaboration. The Foundational Standard emphasizes assessment, surveillance, research, and evaluation. Evidence-informed practice is responsive to the needs and emerging issues of the health unit, and uses the best available evidence to address them. A key component in the new standards involves identifying and working with priority populations. Reducing health inequities is fundamental to the work of Public Health. Former program standards have been slightly regrouped and a new Emergency Preparedness Standard has been added. In addition Health Hazard Management has been added to the Environmental Health Standard. Figure 2 shows how the protocols are organized under each standard.

Figure 1.

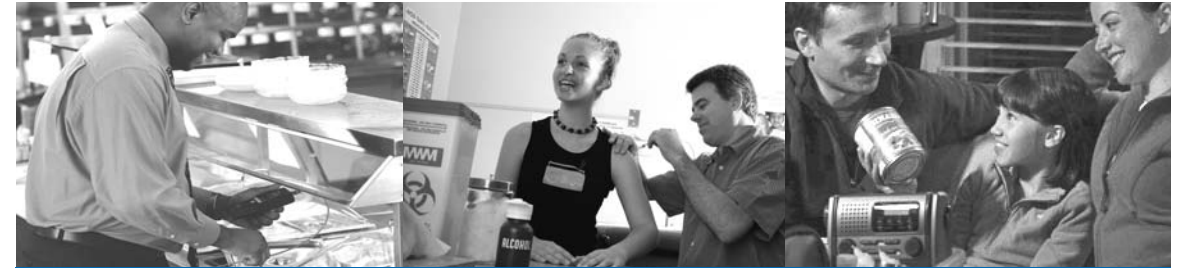
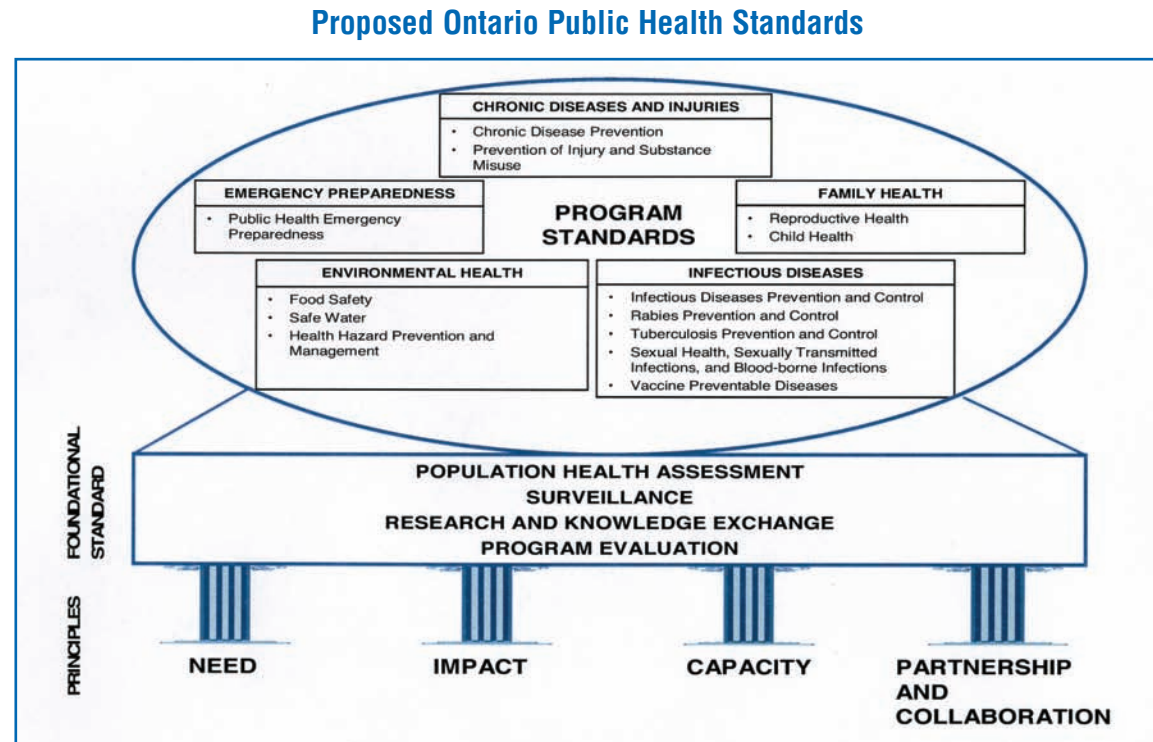


Figure 2.

Ontario Public Health Standards	Protocol Named in Standards
Foundational	Population Health Assessment and Surveillance
Chronic Disease Prevention	Nutritious Food Basket Tobacco Vendor and Manufacturer Inspections Smoke-Free Ontario Act Inspections Tobacco Vendor Compliance Check
Prevention of Injury and Substance Misuse	None
Reproductive Health	Healthy Babies Healthy Children
Child Health	Healthy Babies Healthy Children Oral Health Assessment and Surveillance Children in Need of Treatment (CNOT) Program Preventive Oral Health Services Protocol for the Monitoring of Community Water Fluoride Levels
Emergency Preparedness	Public Health Emergency Preparedness
Infectious Diseases Prevention and Control	Infectious Diseases Institutional Outbreak Prevention and Control Notification of Emergency Services Workers Infection Control in Personal Services Settings Infection Prevention and Control Practices Complaint Infection Prevention and Control in Other High-Risk Settings
Rabies Prevention and Control	Rabies Prevention and Control
Tuberculosis Prevention and Control	Tuberculosis Prevention and Control
Sexual Health, Sexually Transmitted Infections and Blood-borne Infections	Sexual Health, Sexually Transmitted Infections, Prevention and Control
Vaccine Preventable Diseases	Vaccine Storage and Handling Enforcing Legislation Related to Immunization
Food Safety	Food Safety
Safe Water	Drinking Water Recreational Water Beach Management
Health Hazard Prevention and Management	Identification, Investigation and Management of Health Hazards Risk Assessment and Inspection of Facilities