

2. Introduction

2.1. Background

The Toronto Perinatal and Child Health Survey project was conducted as part of the Ministry of Health & Long-Term Care Perinatal and Child Health Survey Strategies Initiative. In December, 2001, the provincial government announced the availability of funding to public health units for traditional survey initiatives that address information needs in support of Early Childhood Development. This money is a transfer payment from the federal government resulting from the First Ministers' agreement on key action areas for the early years (ages 0-6). The Survey Strategies Initiative is expected to provide population-based, representative, cross-sectional measures of health status, health outcomes, and factors related to maternal, infant and child health for the local Board of Health's population or selected sub-populations.

As part of this initiative, the Toronto Perinatal and Child Health Survey was designed to address aspects of selected factors relating to child health, growth, and development from birth to 6 years of age. Toronto Public Health (TPH) program needs assessments identified a lack of sufficient, timely, and representative data in these information areas. Further, TPH's 2001 Health Status Report identifies a lack of Toronto-specific population data regarding children's physical activity levels, measures of food security, circumstances of childhood injury, breastfeeding, parenting practices, and child development (1). This project was intended to provide much needed data in these areas.

2.2. Purpose

The Toronto Perinatal and Child Health Survey was conducted by Compustat Consultants Inc. (Compustat) on behalf of TPH. The overall purpose of this telephone survey was to provide representative data on the prevalence of selected risk and protective factors related to child health and development outcomes of children aged 0-6 years in the City of Toronto. This information can be used to inform and support programs that are designed to improve the health of Toronto's children aged 0-6 years.

2.3. Survey Objectives

The specific objectives of the survey were threefold:

1. To fill data gaps identified by TPH staff in order to address and monitor progress of the 1997 and/or (Draft) 2001 Mandatory Health Program and Service Guidelines (MHPSG) related to perinatal and child health that cannot be met by either the Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System (RRFSS) or by other surveys.

2. To gather local population-based, cross-sectional, representative data on risk and protective factors for perinatal and child health that can be used to assist in planning TPH programs and services.
3. To provide information that may be used as part of a future Toronto Public Health focused reports on Child Health.