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## Introduction

Toronto Public Health (TPH) works to enhance the health of people who live, work and play in Toronto. *Public Health in Toronto, 2004* summarizes programs and activities and connects these with related health indicators. Its purpose is to provide an overview of public health and to serve as a resource for TPH program managers and staff in planning and evaluating programs.

The provincial Mandatory Health Programs and Services Guidelines (MHPSG)<sup>1</sup>, under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*, set out minimum requirements for public health programs and services targeted at disease prevention, health promotion and health protection. In addition TPH delivers programs and services in response to local needs and City Council and Board of Health directives.

The MHPSG form the basis for program planning in Ontario public health units. Using this framework, TPH programs are grouped under six major headings or “clusters”:

- Chronic Disease, Injury Prevention and Substance Abuse Prevention
- Family Health
- Dental Health
- Communicable Disease Control and Sexual Health
- Health and the Environment
- Animal Services and Rabies Control

TPH programs are delivered through the following service areas:

- Healthy Living
- Healthy Families
- Dental and Oral Health
- Communicable Disease Control
- Healthy Environments
- Planning and Policy
- Support Services

In some cases, program activities may be delivered across a number of service areas. For example, the Tobacco Use Prevention and Control Program includes tobacco control activities that are delivered through Healthy Environments services, smoking cessation activities through Healthy Living services, and policy development activities supporting smoke-free environments through Planning & Policy services.

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## Program Profiles and Indicators

*Public Health in Toronto, 2004* profiles 21 programs within the six clusters identified above. Each program profile in the report includes the goals, selected health indicators and activities linked to the indicators. The goals of each program were developed by TPH, taking into consideration the provincial MHPSG goals and recent TPH program redesign processes. Presenting health indicators and related program activities together reinforces the connection between program service delivery and the health of the population.

Health indicators illustrate changes over time and help to identify populations and communities of concern. Timely and accurate indicators also help to determine goals and objectives and to measure performance or progress toward the achievement of these objectives. This evidence helps to inform budget deliberations and guide the allocation of resources to ensure effective program delivery. Indicators also help determine the extent to which TPH complies with the provincial MHPSG.

The set of indicators used in this report was selected initially from the list of *Core Indicators for Public Health in Ontario*.<sup>2</sup> These indicators link to objectives outlined in the MHPSG and were produced through the collaborative efforts of public health epidemiologists in Ontario. The availability of data and its relevance to TPH programs influenced the final selection of indicators. Provincial data is used for comparative purposes where available and appropriate.

For some programs, there are information gaps and few health indicators. TPH is working to fill these gaps. For example, TPH is producing health status reports on attitudes and behaviours using data collected through the Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System, a series of ongoing monthly surveys conducted by Ontario Public Health Units. In the area of children's health, a new perinatal information system recently began reporting more timely and comprehensive data on Toronto birth outcomes and maternal risk factors.

*Public Health in Toronto, 2004* brings together selected health indicators and related activities for public health programs and services. This report is part of TPH's strategy to "make information matter" and ensure that health information is used by public health decision-makers to improve health in Toronto.