



REPORT FOR ACTION

Toronto Urban Health Fund Funding Priorities and Objectives for the Years 2020 to 2026

Date: June 21, 2019

To: Board of Health

From: Medical Officer of Health

Wards: All

SUMMARY

This report outlines changes to the Toronto Urban Health Fund's funding objectives for its three streams: prevention of HIV through sexual transmission, harm reduction, and child and youth resiliency. The updated priorities and funding objectives reflect the epidemiology of HIV, substance use, and overdose data for Toronto and are informed by community consultation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Medical Officer of Health recommends that:

1. The Board of Health approve the proposed Toronto Urban Health Fund funding objectives for the three following streams for the funding period from 2020 to 2026, as outlined in Attachment 1:
 - a. prevention of HIV through sexual transmission;
 - b. harm reduction; and
 - c. child and youth resiliency.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact associated with this report beyond what has already been approved in the 2019 Operating Budget for Toronto Public Health.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on July 4, 2016, the Board of Health adopted item HL 13.5 Toronto Urban Health Fund Changes to Target Populations and Funding Objectives and approved

changes to the target population and funding objectives for the three funding streams: HIV Prevention; Harm Reduction; and Child and Youth Resiliency.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2016.HL13.5>

COMMENTS

TUHF Mandate and Strategy

The Toronto Urban Health Fund (TUHF) supports the Board of Health (BOH) and Toronto Public Health (TPH) in meeting the requirements of the Ontario Public Health Standards (OPHS), by funding community-based non-profit organizations to build individual and community capacity in the areas of prevention of HIV through sexual transmission, harm reduction, and child and youth resiliency.

The Toronto Urban Health Fund provides funding for one-year and three-year projects that address emerging and persistent challenges and trends with respect to HIV and substance use. The Medical Officer of Health annually reviews TUHF funding priorities to ensure community needs are addressed. Developments in HIV prevention research, HIV prevention technologies, and growing public health concerns about harms associated with opioid use have made it necessary to update the current funding objectives and priorities.

The proposed changes to the funding objectives and target populations are the result of a priority setting exercise and community consultation conducted from November 2018 through May 2019.

Changes to the HIV Prevention Funding Stream Priorities

A review of HIV epidemiological data shows that HIV incidence rates in Toronto remain on the rise. Rates of new HIV infection were higher in 2017 than for the previous five-year average from 2012-2016 (Toronto Public Health, 2018). Given this data, there is a need for continued enhancement of HIV testing activities leading to early identification and treatment of new infections. There is also a need to promote the use of prophylaxis to prevent new infections, as well as the use and adherence to antiretroviral medications for achieving both viral load suppression and averting new HIV transmission.

In addition to changes to the epidemiology of HIV, the funding objectives are aligned with the provincial HIV Strategy *HIV/AIDS Strategy to 2026: Focusing Our Efforts – Changing the Course of the HIV Prevention, Engagement and Care Cascade in Ontario*, and the *Toronto to Zero* initiative, the UNAIDS *Fast-Track strategy to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030*.

Proposed updates to the HIV Prevention funding objectives include:

- Re-naming the funding stream from "HIV Prevention" to "Prevention of HIV through Sexual Transmission;"
- Underscoring the critical role Treatment as Prevention (TasP) plays as a prevention strategy in the use of antiretrovirals to suppress viral loads for people living with HIV,

and the use pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) for people who are at high risk of acquiring HIV, and,

- Highlighting the need for undiagnosed people living with HIV to know their HIV serostatus.

Changes to the Harm Reduction Funding Stream Priorities

Toronto continues to be confronted by a challenging opioid crisis. Preliminary data from the Office of the Chief Coroner for Ontario shows that in 2018 there were 1,363 opioid overdose deaths in Ontario, 294 of which were in Toronto. These numbers are expected to increase as coroners complete investigations. In 2019, there have already been 77 suspected opioid deaths in Toronto (Toronto Public Health, 2019).

Actions continue to be taken by TPH, City divisions, and other community partners to implement the Toronto Overdose Action Plan recommendations. The proposed funding stream changes will help expand harm reduction services for underserved groups and geographic areas, as well as to scale up overdose prevention capacity.

Proposed updates to the Harm Reduction funding objectives include:

- Increasing the knowledge, use and uptake of overdose prevention services; and,
- Promoting the use and uptake of community-based harm reduction programs and services.

Changes to the Child and Youth Resiliency Funding Stream Priorities

Between 2008-2017, among persons under age 30, overall HIV rates rose among males, and fell slightly among females. During the same 10-year period, females aged 15 – 29 accounted for 41% of all reported chlamydia cases in 2017. Youth aged 15 – 29 bore the largest brunt of gonorrhea transmission accounting for 52% of new cases reported in 2017 (Toronto Public Health, 2018).

In 2017, 11% of students reported using prescription opioid pain relievers without a prescription, and 1% (or 5,000 students) reported using fentanyl in the past year. There was a substantial increase in the use of illicit ADHD medication from 2007-2017 among grade 7-12 students. During the period, use rose from 1.0% to 2.3%, or over 20,800 students reported misusing ADHD medications in 2017. Reported use of cannabis in 2017 was also high, with 19% of students indicating they used it over the past year (Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, 2017).

The Toronto Urban Health Fund supports resiliency building among vulnerable youth as an effective and positive approach to health promotion. Changes to the Child and Youth Resiliency funding objectives will provide greater clarity and focus for addressing increase in STI rates, as well as evolving behaviours related to substance use among youth.

Proposed updates to the Child and Youth resiliency objectives stream include:

- Focusing on building individual assets and relational resources in contrast to behavior change approaches;

- Underscoring the importance of behavioural, environmental, psychological and social factors for achieving optimal health and well-being;
- Increasing the presence and access to protective resources; and,
- Promoting social and emotional competence in the context of adversity.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Toronto Urban Health Fund Funding Objectives and Priority Populations (2020-2026)

References

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. (2017). Drug use among Ontario students, 1977-2017: Detailed findings from the Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey. Retrieved June 6, 2019, from <https://www.camh.ca/-/media/files/pdf---osduhs/drug-use-among-ontario-students-1977-2017---detailed-findings-from-the-osduhs.pdf?la=en&hash=2B434CDAAD485834497E3B43F2264BDEB255F29F>

Toronto Public Health. (2019). Toronto Overdose Information System. Retrieved June 5, 2019, from <https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/health-wellness-care/health-inspections-monitoring/toronto-overdose-information-system/>

Toronto Public Health. (2018). Communicable Diseases in Toronto, 2017. Retrieved June 6, 2019 from <https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/health-wellness-care/health-inspections-monitoring/communicable-diseases-toronto/>