

ATTACHMENT 1

HL24.1 Attachment 1

TO Supports

COVID-19 Equity Action Plan

December 2020



“The City has been doing what it can to support vulnerable residents during this pandemic, and we will keep doing everything we can. We are focused on helping the other governments, particularly when it comes to COVID-19 testing, so that we can stop the spread of this virus. This work is crucial right now and will take collaboration between the City, community agencies in these neighbourhoods and both the provincial and federal governments.”

- Mayor John Tory

“While COVID-19 has affected all of us, sadly we continue to learn of more evidence in North America and beyond that shows that racialized people and individuals living in lower-income households are over-represented in COVID-19 data. My team and I continue to carefully review this and other local data to inform actions to help keep our community safer as we continue living with this virus. Our City's Equity Action Plan is another example of our collaborative work in this area to better address the root causes of what underpins our health and enhance support in our community.”

- Dr. Eileen de Villa,
Medical Officer of Health,
Toronto Public Health

“In the first wave of the pandemic earlier this year, our collective efforts and sacrifice worked. Together, we stayed home, we flattened the curve, and we saved lives. But our public health data shows that some people in our city are not only at greater risk of this virus but are also disproportionately impacted by lockdown measures. Now, as we enter a second period of lockdown, all three levels of government must do more to protect the health and livelihoods of low-income Torontonians and people that identify with a racialized group. That's where Toronto's Equity Action Plan comes in.”

- Councillor Joe Cressy
(Spadina-Fort York);
Chair of the Toronto Board of
Health

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COVID-19 has laid bare and exacerbated long-standing, systemic health inequities related to poverty, racism, and other forms of discrimination.

Unequal access to the social determinants of health has created the conditions for COVID-19 to disproportionately impact Torontonians who are: Indigenous, Black or racialized, who are precariously employed or live on a low income, who may experience challenges taking time off from work when ill and who may be living in housing situations where it is more difficult to isolate from others.

Vulnerable Torontonians have also been hardest hit by the unintended consequences of public health measures to flatten the curve, including service disruptions and lockdown. Throughout the pandemic, many have faced acute challenges related to hunger, loss of sanitation facilities, lack of Internet connectivity and barriers to essential social and health services.

Many newcomers, including temporary foreign workers, refugees, refugee claimants and undocumented Torontonians are facing extreme challenges and uncertainty during the pandemic, particularly those without social networks in this country, who do not speak or read English, and who may not be eligible for financial supports or health care coverage.

To support Torontonians who have been hardest hit by COVID-19 and to stop the virus spread, the City is taking urgent action on multiple fronts, in strong collaboration with community partners.

Our guiding framework is called *TO Supports: COVID-19 Equity Action Plan*.

TO Supports was rolled out quickly in March 2020. Our plan is constantly evolving and intensifying in light of new information, new partnerships, and new pandemic conditions.



The major actions the City is taking to tackle COVID-19 disparities are reported in the following pages, along with implementation notes, current status indicators, and related intergovernmental requests.

In addition, special attention is drawn, on each page, to advice received from community representatives and community sector partners,¹ without whom this work could never succeed.

TO Supports will be updated on a regular basis to document impacts, gaps and emerging priorities and to serve as an accountability tool with community, until the pandemic is resolved and pathways to an equitable recovery in Toronto are in place.

1 See: Toronto Public Health. October 2020: COVID-19 and the Social Determinants of Health: Community Consultation Report. Download at:

<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2020/hl/bgrd/backgroundfile-157257.pdf>

TO Supports Action Areas

HEALTH COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH

- Non-Stigmatizing Data
- Relevant, Multilingual Health Education
- Community Outreach

COMMUNITY HEALTH ACCESS

- Expand Community Testing/Flu Shot Clinics
- Voluntary Isolation Site
- Overdose Prevention

SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- Emergency Funding
- Donations Management
- Infection Prevention and Control Support
- Networking and Coordination

SHELTER AND HOUSING SUPPORT

- Safe Shelters
- Response to Encampments
- Rapid Housing
- Shelter System Recovery Plan

INCOME SUPPORT

- Uninterrupted Income Support
- New Benefits
- Advocate for Emergency Benefits, Eviction Prevention



FOOD SECURITY

- Emergency Funding
- Space for Food Banks
- Food Delivery
- Culturally Appropriate Food
- Black Food Sovereignty Plan

CARE FOR SENIORS

- Prevent and Manage LTC Outbreaks
- Protection for Staff
- Reducing isolation

DIGITAL ACCESS

- Free WiFi and Devices
- Free Activities

MENTAL HEALTH AND FAMILY SAFETY

- Free, Multilingual, Culturally-Grounded Counselling
- Support Services

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

- Safe Child Care
- Online Programs
- Flexible Policies



Health Communication and Outreach



Action 1: Communicate sociodemographic data in non-stigmatizing ways.

- In May 2020, Toronto Public Health became one of the first public health units in the country to collect and release reported COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations by neighbourhood, race and income.
- Current COVID-19 infection data by race and income on toronto.ca with contextual information to explain:
 - How social determinants affect health and infectious disease risk, including specifically naming racism, other forms of discrimination, and social and economic drivers.
 - How COVID-19 infection data by race and income will be used by the City and partners.
- Current neighbourhood-level COVID-19 data and engaging with local service providers about findings and use this insight to inform local public health and support service responses.
- Engaging with community members and organizations to communicate data stories and findings using knowledge translation techniques that reflect lived experiences, can inform constructive action, and do not stigmatize communities. Assign a staff lead to be community contact.
- Partnering and in collaboration with local Indigenous researchers and service providers to ensure we are respecting principles of Indigenous governance and to create evidence that is useful and beneficial for Indigenous communities.

Continued (1 of 2)

Leads: Toronto Public Health, Emergency Operations Centre, Strategic Communications, Social Development, Finance and Administration

IN PROGRESS

COMMUNITY ADVICE

Report risk factors accurately, with an action orientation (e.g. systemic racism, not race, is a risk).

Reports of COVID-19 disparities should always include actions to reduce the disparities.

Establish respectful data governance agreements and partner with communities to narrate COVID-19 data respectfully, accurately and accessibly.

Continued (2 of 2)

- Collaborating with Black health equity leaders and service providers and the City of Toronto Confronting Anti-Black Racism Unit to ensure that data are presented in ways that reflect the realities of Black communities and can inform appropriate action.
- Communicating continuously with the *Targeted COVID-19 Equity Measures Team* to anticipate needs and plan and implement data-driven responses.

Health Communication and Outreach



IN PROGRESS

COMMUNITY ADVICE

Address the digital barriers to accessing health information online, including the promotion of health messages through non-digital platforms for those with no/limited internet access and/or low technological literacy.

Tailor health messages to be actionable for people's diverse social circumstances.

Action 2: Implement an accessible, multilingual COVID-19 public education campaign for communities most impacted by COVID-19.

- Establishing COVID Public Education Workgroup through Emergency Operations Centre.
- Redesigning, simplifying and ensuring accessibility of key public health education materials.
- The translation of public health education materials into 30 languages spoken in neighbourhoods with highest COVID-19 case counts, available at toronto.ca/COVID19, including:
 - “Do’s and Don’ts of Wearing a Mask,” “How Does COVID-19 Spread,” COVID-19 alert app poster and others.
 - New translations of child care screening poster and questionnaire.
 - New translations of school and staff screening posters & questionnaires.
- Customizing health messages to be population-specific.
- Collaborating with community-based agencies to promote COVID-19 prevention and testing messages.
- Published [Anti-Black Racism Analysis Tool](#) for Radically Equitable COVID-19 Response.
- Broadening dissemination to include ethnic and community-specific media.
- Addressing stigma as part of COVID-19 communications.

Leads: Toronto Public Health, Emergency Operations Centre, Strategic Communications

Health Communication and Outreach



Action 3: Expand community outreach with community sector partners, faith groups, landlords and local businesses.

- Presenting online, in accessible formats, to groups of residents primarily those living in Toronto neighbourhoods with the highest COVID-19 case counts, to provide information on COVID-19 transmission, prevention, testing information and community support.
- Presenting online to community agency staff and volunteers to build their capacity in communicating COVID-19 public health messages to their clients.
- During the summer months, Toronto Public Health set up COVID-19 information tables in various community locations, including food banks, drop-in centres, pop-up test sites and multi-unit residential building lobbies. COVID-19 fact sheets and infographics, pop-up testing promotional flyers and 211 information were distributed and staff were available to answer resident questions and provide referrals to community supports.
- Canvassing community various locations in the northwest, such as shopping centres and grocery stores, to provide information, answer questions and promote relevant community support services in COVID-19 “hotspots”.
- Investing in community peer workers to promote COVID-19 health information and testing in multiple languages and in culturally relevant settings.
- Distributing COVID-19 information to Ontario Works recipients through regular mailings and via Toronto Employment and Social Services caseworkers.

IN PROGRESS

COMMUNITY ADVICE

Address the digital barriers to accessing health information online, including the promotion of health messages through non-digital platforms for those with no/limited internet access and/or low technological literacy.

Leads: Toronto Public Health, Emergency Operations Centre, Social Development, Finance and Administration, Toronto Employment and Social Services

Community Health Access



Action 4: Expand COVID-19 testing and flu shot clinics in neighbourhoods most impacted by COVID-19.

- The City will work with the Province of Ontario to monitor the capacity and resident uptake of testing of COVID-19 testing sites in target neighbourhoods by:
 - Promoting temporary COVID-19 testing clinics, using translated promotional posters and social media banners.
 - Establishing a Space Needs Working Group (including Emergency Operations Centre, Corporate Real Estate Management, Parks, Forestry and Recreation, Toronto Community Housing, Toronto Public Library and Toronto Public Health) to allocate suitable City facilities for COVID-19 response, especially when there are competing demands or when there are challenges identifying suitable space.
- Supporting healthcare organizations and community-based agencies to access City facilities to run COVID-19 response activities, including testing and flu shot clinics.
- As of November 20, Parks, Forestry and Recreation has arranged for space for pop-up COVID-19 testing clinics at 20 community recreation facilities in neighbourhoods most impacted by COVID-19.
- As of November 20, Parks, Forestry and Recreation has collaborated with community health organizations and Toronto Public Health to run 20+ flu shot clinics at community recreation facilities.

Intergovernmental Requests and Actions

- The Emergency Operations Centre is working closely with Local Health Integration Networks (LHIN) and healthcare system organizations to make City facilities available as walk-in, low-barrier COVID-19 testing sites in local communities, based in part on neighbourhoods with high COVID-19 case counts and low testing rates.

Leads: Emergency Operations Centre, Toronto Public Health, Parks, Forestry and Recreation

IN PROGRESS

COMMUNITY ADVICE

Advocate for increased testing in neighbourhoods most impacted by COVID-19.

Fund community peer outreach models to promote health information and testing.



Community Health Access



Action 5: Operate Canada's first voluntary COVID-19 isolation centre.

- Toronto Public Health opened a voluntary isolation centre to provide a safe, comfortable place for people with COVID-19 infection or their close household contacts to safely isolate.
- Barriers to self-isolation at home could include living in multi-generational homes, homes with multiple people or people living together in small spaces.
- The centre is modelled on similar sites internationally where the challenge of successful self-isolation is complicated by high density residential settings, and was set up to complement existing isolation and/or quarantine centres operating in the City by the Shelter, Support & Housing Administration and the federal government.
- People who choose to stay at the centre will receive their own room, meals and daily contact with Toronto Public Health to help guide them through the recommended isolation period required of people diagnosed with COVID-19 (approximately 10-days as recommended by the Ministry of Health but can vary based on the case).
- It is critical that individuals who stay at the Centre are able to isolate and live independently, as there are minimal supports onsite. The City's other isolation sites are intended for individuals who need additional support.

IN PROGRESS

COMMUNITY ADVICE

Provide self-isolation supports for those needing assistance.

Make voluntary isolation sites available for residents who cannot effectively isolate due to their household circumstances.

Continued (1 of 2)

Continued (2 of 2)

- The site was secured through a hotel provider, and includes basic accommodation and food provision. Given the ongoing response to COVID-19, Toronto Public Health has minimal staff onsite.
- The Centre is now at capacity, serving Toronto residents and agreements to support Peel Public Health clients and the City's out of province transportation workers who need isolation supports.

Intergovernmental Requests and Actions

- The Government of Canada has generously provided \$13.9 million for the full operation of the Centre, at the request of the City of Toronto and Toronto Public Health. The Centre is expected to be in operation throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.
- On November 12, 2020, Public Health Agency of Canada launched an application process for other isolation centres, which several other municipalities are participating in. To date, Toronto Public Health has shared lessons learned with multiple other municipalities and jurisdictions.
- Further work is underway to explore options for supporting individuals with dependent family members (e.g. children or elders) to isolate.
- The federal government provides other isolation and recovery facilities, including for those arriving into Canada who do not have a quarantine plan. City Council has requested that the federal government continue to provide temporary accommodation for refugee claimant arrivals at the border or place of entry until they have a permanent housing plan in place.

Community Health Access



Action 6: Improve low-barrier access to harm reduction and overdose prevention.

- Urgent Public Health Needs sites (i.e. overdose prevention sites) are planned to open at two temporary shelter programs by year end 2020, pending regulatory changes and staff hiring).
- Virtual training continues to be provided by Toronto Public Health to service providers and people who use drugs in the areas of: overdose prevention, recognition and response.
- Coordination of harm reduction and overdose prevention services and supplies continues to be provided to shelter programs, respite programs, community agencies and people who use drugs.
- Recruitment of agencies outside of the downtown core that will provide harm reduction supply and naloxone distribution.
- Ongoing distribution of naloxone to agencies throughout the City of Toronto.

Intergovernmental Requests and Actions

- City Council has made multiple requests of other governments to respond to the opioid crisis since 2017.
- In November 2020, the Board of Health recommended that City Council call upon the federal and provincial governments to provide support (including funding and regulatory changes, where appropriate) to increase low-barrier harm reduction and overdose prevention services, as well as other services that are essential to people at high risk of overdose (such as treatment, grief and trauma supports, etc.). These calls include requests for funding to immediately scale-up harm reduction (and other) essential services; provide longer term support and expand safe supply program options; support a Urgent Public Health Needs Site program in Ontario and reinstate previous funding to overdose prevention sites, and pilot virtual and peer-witnessing.

IN PROGRESS

COMMUNITY ADVICE

Improve low-barrier access to harm reduction and overdose prevention services beyond downtown Toronto, including isolation site.

Advocate to the federal and provincial governments for increased funding and support for implementation of managed opioid/ safer supply program.



TO Supports

Support for Community Partners



LAUNCHED

COMMUNITY ADVICE

Bolster funding for community agencies to help them sustain their vital pandemic support role; ensure that this funding is flexible and can be used to meet emergent needs.

Action 7: Direct emergency funding to community partners serving vulnerable residents during the pandemic.

- \$10.2 Million secured in June for emergency funding to sustain community agencies serving vulnerable residents. Monies have been secured from 3 sources to create the TO Supports Investment Fund:
 - 20% carve out of Phase One of the Provincial Social Services Relief Fund (\$7.8M).
 - The Canadian Medical Association Foundation through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (\$1.8M).
 - Private donors (\$0.55M).
- To date, \$7.6M has been allocated to a total of eighty community agencies and groups.
- A final round of allocations will be completed in December 2020.
- Funding to Indigenous and Black-mandated agencies have been priorities.
- Emergency guidelines implemented to enable agencies with existing City contracts to purchase equipment and materials to sustain service delivery during COVID-19, including acquisition of technology.

Leads: Social Development, Finance and Administration, Toronto Office of Partnerships,
Toronto Employment and Social Services

Support for Community Partners



IN PROGRESS

COMMUNITY ADVICE

Increase supply of masks and PPE for agencies to use and distribute.

Action 8: Direct emergency donations to community partners serving vulnerable residents during the pandemic.

- Received hundreds of offers from residents, businesses and organizations and matched more than \$15,500,000 in donations through the [COVID-19 DonateTO](#) portal and Toronto Public Library Foundation.
- Donations were directed to 200+ community-based agencies, via the Community Coordination Plan:
 - 550,000+ Personal Protective Equipment items.
329,000 single use face masks and 12,400 reusable cloth masks.
 - \$11,000,000+ in beds, household items and technology to shelters and the Rapid Rehousing Initiative.
 - \$1,000,000+ of produce in support of food security.
 - 68,000 hygiene supplies (soap, cleanser, hygiene kits, tampons, diapers).
 - 200 internet connectivity kits including laptops and WiFi, as well as over 800 WiFi hotspots.

Leads: Social Development, Finance and Administration, Toronto Office of Partnerships, Toronto Public Library

Support for Community Partners



IN PROGRESS

COMMUNITY ADVICE

Provide centralized Infection Protection and Control supports for community-based agencies.

Action 9: Provide dedicated Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) supports to community partner agencies serving vulnerable populations during the pandemic.

- Supplied personal protective equipment to homelessness services system partners.
- Developed and disseminated tailored [COVID-19 guidance](#) documents and [interactive webinar](#) for community agencies to reopen and serve clients onsite.
- Share public health information with community agencies participating on Community Cluster Tables and answer their questions. Community agencies can also receive guidance via the Toronto Public Health COVID-19 Hotline (416-338-7600).
- Shelter, Support and Housing Administration has developed [guidance documents](#) for shelters and homeless service providers.
- Delivered COVID-19 webinar tailored to meet the information needs of community agencies.

Intergovernmental Requests and Actions

- City Council has previously requested enhanced provincial Infection Prevention and Control supports for long-term care homes.
- November 2020: City Council voted to call upon on the Federal and Provincial Governments to provide financial resources to support increased community outreach in high transmission neighbourhoods to support access to COVID-19 testing, the promotion of voluntary self-isolation facilities, and access to health and social services.

Leads: Shelter, Support and Housing Administration, Toronto Public Health

Support for Community Partners



IN PROGRESS

Action 10: Enable networked leadership and local collective action among community partners serving vulnerable residents during the pandemic.

- Convened the City-Community Response Table with 70+ community agencies and 11 City Divisions from March to July, initially on a daily basis, for rapid information sharing and issues identification.
- Launched and provided direct staff support for “COVID-19 Community Coordination Plan” for 400+ community agencies (through partnership with United Way Greater Toronto)
 - 12 clusters of agencies now meet regularly to distribute donations, identify shared issues and plan responses.
 - 10 clusters are place-based; 1 cluster is for African, Caribbean and Black serving organizations (COVID-19 Black Resilience Table); 1 cluster is for city-wide agencies.
 - A cluster for Indigenous-led agencies is being explored and a cluster agencies serving newcomers will be established by end of 2020. Staff will engage disability sector to determine best methods for inclusion and participation in Community Coordination Plan. Updates to be provided by December 2021.
 - \$715,000 will be allocated to clusters to collaboratively identify and address priority issues for vulnerable residents in their respective areas. A separate approach has been co-created with Indigenous organizations to allocate \$65,000.

Leads: Social Development, Finance and Administration, Toronto Office of Partnerships

Shelter and Housing Support



Action 11: Ensure the shelter system continues to meet COVID-19 public health measures.

- Opened 40 new shelter locations during Wave 1 to create physical distancing in the shelter system and provide spaces for people to move indoor from encampments.
- Continuing to operate 23 new locations to provide close to 2,300 spaces created in new temporary shelters and hotel programs.
- Continue to maintain physical distancing through use of expanded facilities, including extending leases wherever possible.
- Implemented proactive screening, mandatory mask directive, distribution of personal protective equipment and enhanced Infection Prevention and Control measures onsite.
- Continue Quality Assurance site visits underway to validate physical distancing standards.
- Explore design options to further reduce transmission of the virus such as ventilation systems and impermeable barriers.
- Continue active screening and monitoring of clients and staff.
- Continue proactive mobile testing in partnership with Toronto Public Health and health sector partners.
- Continue to provide transportation for homeless clients to assessment centres.

Lead: Shelter, Support and Housing Administration

IN PROGRESS

COMMUNITY ADVICE

Deepen the collaboration and coordination with health partners – including continuing and expanding Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) measures and connecting shelter sites with primary care and other needed health services.

Shelter and Housing Support



Action 12: Meet emerging needs of shelter clients, people living in encampments and those facing housing precarity during the pandemic.

- Successfully housed more than 2,500 people who were homeless in shelters into permanent housing through a combination of housing allowances and rent-geared-to-income units. This represents a 50% increase compared to the same time last year through these programs.
- Continue to provide access to shelter and housing for people to move indoors.
- Completed the Winter Service Plan adding 560 spaces, including shelter capacity and supportive housing
- Established the Interdivisional Steering Committee for Encampment Response to guide a holistic approach to encampments. Since April, more than 1,000 people have been referred from encampments into safe indoor spaces in shelters and hotel programs.
- Continue to work with interdivisional and community partners to review and enhance approach to encampments using a housing as a human right approach and that protects client and community safety.
- Provided access to washroom and sanitation services for people experiencing homelessness, including deploying 22 portable toilets to locations across the City as well as operating City-operated facilities to provide access to showers, washrooms, and drinking water.
- Housing Stabilization Fund rules changed to allow support for clients relocating outside the Greater Toronto Area to pay last month's rent and moving costs in Ontario.

IN PROGRESS

COMMUNITY ADVICE

Shift the way we shelter people to provide COVID-safe, dignified options including by repurposing investments in services that are no longer viable during a pandemic.

Leads: Shelter, Support and Housing Administration, Emergency Operations Centre

Shelter and Housing Support



Action 13: Implement the COVID-19 Interim Shelter Recovery Strategy.

- Completed an [Interim Shelter Recovery Infrastructure and Implementation Plan](#) in partnership with the United Way Greater Toronto and based on [Shelter Recovery Strategy](#) designed by homelessness services system partners.
- Ensure everyone in COVID hotel programs has a housing plan.
- Conduct portfolio review of all shelter facilities to identify those no longer viable due to COVID-19 measures and those that are well-positioned to convert to housing.
- Identify how existing funding for non-viable programs under COVID-19 can be repurposed for supportive housing.
- Continue expanding implementation of the Coordinated Access System, including enhancing the Shelter Management Information System, to ensure that units are prioritized for people experiencing chronic homelessness and who are particularly vulnerable individuals.
- Review across programs with an aim to improve shared effectiveness, eliminate duplication, improve integration and adapt for changes to need or service organization as a result of the pandemic.
- Enhance data collection systems for measuring and mitigating increases from other systems and returns from housing.

Continued (1 of 3)

Lead: Shelter, Support and Housing Administration

IN PROGRESS

COMMUNITY ADVICE

Minimize the flow of people into homelessness due to evictions and discharges from other systems

Continued (2 of 3)

- Continue the Rapid Housing Initiative to provide access to housing allowances and rent geared to income units to move people out of shelter.
- Implement enhanced eviction prevention measures, including the Eviction Prevention in the Community (EPIC) program expansion and continue to increased Rent Bank funding with flexible program rules.
- Work with United Way to redesign the drop-in model for the pandemic to support eviction prevention.
- Enhance data systems, in alignment with the new Data for Equity Strategy, to enable better collection of equity based data to ensure people who are housed are representative of the shelter population, including enhancing data collected through the Shelter Management Information System and Centralized Waiting List .
- Work with Toronto Indigenous Community Advisory Board (TICAB) to develop implementation plan for Indigenous specific recovery strategy, aligned with the Meeting in the Middle strategy.
- Develop a service model and funding framework for transitioning shelters to supportive housing.
- Establish measures for client flow indicators, estimate shelter capacity needs, use data to determine when to close/convert shelter beds and how to prioritize clients for converted supportive housing units.

Intergovernmental Requests and Actions

- Convene a regional table with GTHA service managers focused on collaborative discharge planning and developing a shared referral and escalation process.
- Advocate for changes to discharges from provincial systems, particularly corrections including implementing community re-entry planning and housing plans well before release date and establishing specialized program supports that target inmates who are more likely to be homeless upon release and who have a history of homelessness, mental illness and/or addictions.
- City Council has requested that the Province, among other things, ensure that appropriate primary health care, harm reduction, overdose prevention, and mental health services are available to support individuals who are homeless; provide ongoing and sustainable funding for the mental health case management and harm reduction supports; and proactive, regular, and accessible mobile COVID-19 testing in shelter and respite settings.

Continued (3 of 3)

Intergovernmental Requests and Actions

- Convene a regional table with Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area service managers focused on collaborative discharge planning and developing a shared referral and escalation process.
- Advocate for changes to discharges from provincial systems, particularly corrections including implementing community re-entry planning and housing plans well before release date and establishing specialized program supports that target inmates who are more likely to be homeless upon release and who have a history of homelessness, mental illness and/or addictions.
- City Council has requested that the Province, among other things, ensure that appropriate primary health care, harm reduction, overdose prevention, and mental health services are available to support individuals who are homeless; provide ongoing and sustainable funding for the mental health case management and harm reduction supports; and proactive, regular, and accessible mobile COVID-19 testing in shelter and respite settings.

Shelter and Housing Support



IN PROGRESS

COMMUNITY ADVICE

Invest in housing and supports to decrease the volume and duration of the need for emergency shelter – including an acquisition strategy for hotels and a redevelopment plan for shelters into permanent housing.

Action 14: Implement the Housing and Homelessness Recovery Response Plan to create additional permanent housing opportunities.

- Modular Housing (110 units by Q4 2020; 140 additional in 2021).
- Identify 2-3 pilot sites for conversion from shelter to housing.
- Develop and act on an acquisition strategy for hotels, rooming houses, and other buildings.
- Expedite development of modular housing units.
- Advocate to other Governments to accelerate funding under the City's 10 year (2020-203) HousingTO Action Plan.
- Advocate for an increase to the Canada Ontario Housing Benefit to assist more people to exit shelter.
- Work with Concept to Keys Project to expedite affordable housing projects through approvals. Link housing benefits to new affordable homes to ensure they are affordable enough for those in shelters and on wait-list.
- Develop a standardized and coordinated funding framework for supportive housing operating funding to support increased capital initiatives.

Continued (1 of 2)

Leads: Shelter, Support and Housing Administration, Housing Secretariat

Continued (2 of 2)

Intergovernmental Requests and Actions

- Work with United Way, Ontario Health Toronto Region and other orders of government to re-examine the system of funding and programs for supports needed for people in shelter and as they move into housing.
- City Council has requested federal and provincial governments provide urgent capital and operating funding to create 3,000 affordable rental and supportive housing units in 24 months, including the development of new modular housing, acquisitions, renovations and "shovel ready" projects, and additional new portable (and flexible) Canada-Ontario Housing Benefits.

Income Support



ACHIEVED

Action 15: Ensure income supports are delivered uninterrupted during the pandemic.

- Processed 9,400 new applications for Ontario Works assistance since start of COVID-19.
 - Federal Canada Emergency Response Benefit / Employment Insurance program reduced impacts on the Ontario Works caseload in Toronto.
- Toronto Employment and Social Services Caseworkers conduct regular "wellness checks" by phone; refer clients to critical social service supports for housing stability, food security, social isolation, mental health and addictions.
- Supported clients transition to online services:
 - Enrollment in 'MyBenefits' portal doubled, with 22,000+ Ontario Works clients enrolled as of Sept.
 - Streamlined application process, enabling financial benefits to be issued at first contact; province waives requirement for wet (in person) signatures.
 - In-person cheque pick-up reduced from 718 (March) to less than 15 (October).
- Launched the Virtual Caseworker Project that will provide a more supportive remote service experience and increase access to City staff and caseworkers for vulnerable residents/clients.
- 3 Toronto Employment and Social Services offices remain open for clients requiring in-person support (crisis situation; no phone/digital access; low literacy; other needs).
- Over 51,800 Ontario Works clients in Toronto received the Provincial COVID-19 Emergency Discretionary Benefit.

Lead: Toronto Employment and Social Services

Income Support



Action 16: Advocate for emergency benefits and eviction prevention.

Intergovernmental Requests and Actions

- The City has requested the Province immediately re-instate the spring 2020 moratorium on eviction of tenants.
- The City has requested the Federal and Provincial governments to accelerate distribution, expand the reach, and make completely accessible and transparent all financial supports directed toward people, including populations that have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 such as women, racialized individuals, low-income individuals, and those living with disabilities; and to provide adequate paid sick days and income supports for those who need to isolate but cannot afford to do so and for workers and businesses affected by public health restrictions.
- The City requests the Province to immediately extend eligibility for the Ontario Works Emergency Assistance benefit to include all working age adults who have tested positive for COVID-19 or reside in a household where someone has tested positive and have been advised (by an employer, medical practitioner, nurse practitioner, public health official or other government official) to self-isolate and who do not otherwise qualify for either Ontario Works or Federal benefits.

Lead: Toronto Employment and Social Services, City Manager Office

IN PROGRESS

COMMUNITY ADVICE

Advocate for:

- long-term Ontario Works & Ontario Disability Support Program increases
- extension of the Canada Emergency Response Benefit
- income supports for uninsured residents
- paid sick leave for all Ontario workers.
- Stay on residential evictions

Food Security



IN PROGRESS

COMMUNITY ADVICE

Fund and accelerate long-term policy solutions for food security, including access to healthy and culturally appropriate food.



TO Supports

Action 17: Respond to urgent food insecurity due to service disruptions, isolation and loss of income during the pandemic.

- Launched a new City-wide emergency food response with community partners to:
 - Support food banks with: space for physical distancing, supplies, staff, drivers and fleet services.
 - Facilitate large scale meal production and food delivery for seniors and other vulnerable residents staying home/unable to shop.
 - Direct donations and funding to neighbourhood food access programs.
 - Invest in long-term community food resilience and access to culturally appropriate food.
- \$2.85 Million invested in community food responses through the *TO Supports* Investment Fund, with focus on culturally appropriate foods.
- \$1.0 Million received through the [COVID-19 DonateTO](#) portal for emergency food programs.
- More than 16,000 households/46,000 individuals served at 12 emergency food banks opened in Toronto Public Library locations. 4 Arenas opened for food banks/food storage.
- 33,000 food hampers delivered by the Canadian Red Cross.
- 500,000+ prepared meals distributed via partnerships with 158 community agencies.
- 60,000 student families received \$50 grocery cards while school was interrupted, through repurposing of student nutrition grants.
- 2 Toronto Public Library locations (Albion; Jane/Sheppard) continue to provide space for North York Harvest Food Bank services.
- 3,000 seedlings donated for local urban food growing, resulting in 750 pounds of produce donated to Daily Bread Food Bank and the Salvation Army.

Leads: Social Development, Finance and Administration, Emergency Operations Centre, Toronto Public Library, Parks, Forestry and Recreation, Toronto Office of Partnerships.

Care for Seniors



IN PROGRESS

Action 18: Prevent and manage outbreaks and provide highest quality care to seniors living in City-operated long-term care homes.

- Provide care and service in a diverse environment where residents from 70 countries of origin, on average are 85 years of age, and most have moderate to severe cognitive impairment and require help with bathing, dressing, toileting, and eating.
- Enhanced Infection Prevention And Control (IPAC) practices and procedures including:
 - Independent hospital IPAC audits.
 - Staff education.
 - High-touch area cleaning and disinfection.
 - Isolation of residents, as necessary.
 - Cohorting residents and staff.
- Active screening and regular surveillance testing, universal masking, physical distancing, and suspension of all non-essential visits. (Only registered essential caregivers and essential end of life visits are permitted.)
- Use of personal protective equipment (PPE) appropriate to specific situations, including N95 masks, isolation gowns, gloves, eye protection, etc.
- Applying lessons learned from early outbreaks and quickly mobilizing resources necessary to support operations, including creating isolation space, as required.
- Ensuring frequent and transparent communications with residents, families and stakeholders.

Continued (1 of 2)

Lead: Seniors Services and Long-Term Care

Staffing Strategy

- To support resident care needs and added outbreaks precautions:
 - 220+ City staff were deployed to long-term care homes between March and September.
 - 600+ new staff hired to respond to 'new normal' in Long-Term Care, expedited hiring began in March.
 - Essential frontline long-term care staff received temporary provincial pandemic pay top-up.
 - Single employer declaration remains in effect: City of Toronto was overwhelmingly the employer of choice for City staff (89%).
- Quality of Life Actions:
 - Priorities are to ensure the health and safety of residents while supporting their emotional and social well-being.
 - Devices were secured and public Wi-Fi expanded in Long-Term Care homes to support 2,600+ residents with internet access for virtual visits with loved ones and online activities.
 - DonateTO continues to raise funds to acquire tablets for Long-Term Care residents.
- Facility Enhancements:
 - Enhanced controlled single entry per building.
 - Physical distancing measures for residents and staff.
 - Additional cleaning systems for high touch areas.
 - Restricted access to staff areas and furnishings.

Intergovernmental Requests and Actions

- Made 12 recommendations to the Independent Commission on Long Term Care with a focus on safety and the necessary investments to ensure resiliency in the sector, improve quality of care and life for residents, enhance trust and accountability and improve working conditions.
- City Council has requested the federal government create a national long-term care strategy, and that both governments provide supports for residents and staff.

Care for Seniors



IN PROGRESS

Action 19: Support vulnerable seniors living in the community and isolating during the pandemic.

- Homemaker and Nurses Services Program maintained service for high risk clients throughout the pandemic and resumed full service to all 3,000+ clients by October 5, 2020.
- Adult Day Programs at City Long-Term Care Homes continue to be suspended; however staff are conducting wellness checks/friendly visit calls, online programs, online family support groups, and mail out activity packages.
- Distribute donated reusable cloth face masks and technology (e.g. tablets) via senior-serving community partners.
- Provide masks and on-site daily COVID-19 screening and referrals to appropriate resources to clients in Supportive Housing.
- Toronto Community Housing distributes face masks to all senior residents, conducts tenant wellness checks including provision of COVID-19 information for seniors, supports seniors' food access.
- Throughout the pandemic the City has focused on communicating accurate, clear and up to date information about services available to seniors who need extra support with food access, mental health, virtual activities, transportation and more, via webinars, emails to seniors-serving agencies and housing providers, information flyers translated into multiple languages, Councillor communications and toronto.ca.

Lead: Seniors Services and Long-Term Care.

Digital Access



IN PROGRESS

COMMUNITY ADVICE

Increase access to internet and technology for people in need.

Action 20: Increase access to affordable internet and devices to keep people connected during the pandemic.

- Digital Equity Policy is under development for 2021, with the goal to create city-wide high-speed internet connecting underserved areas and reducing internet cost for lower income Torontonians. Meanwhile, the City has partnered with technology and telecommunications companies to distribute devices and expand affordable, temporary internet access during the pandemic.
- Free Wifi has been enabled in 6 residential apartment towers (25 to be completed in total) in low income neighbourhoods for 1 year through donations from telecommunication companies:
 - 6,600+ apartment units and roughly 13,000 residents connected to internet.
 - Black, Indigenous and racialized youth will receive job skills training through the project.
- Free public WiFi has been enabled and expanded in City-operated spaces including:
 - 9 shelter programs.
 - All long-term care homes.
 - All Toronto Public Library locations, 24/7 (indoor and outdoor access).
- Affordable high-speed internet for TCHC residents via Rogers Connected for Success program.

Continued (1 of 2)

Continued (2 of 2)

- Launched new digital access benefits to assist with monthly home internet and one-time equipment costs for clients participating in online employment and community programs (\$773,000 issued to 2200+clients since June).
- 500 free smart phones + 6 months free data were received via [DonateTO](#) and distributed through the Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council.
- Toronto Public Library Foundation donated 1000+ “Connectivity Kits” (access point + used laptop) through community partner agencies.

Intergovernmental Requests and Actions

- The City is leading discussions with other large cities on digital government/broadband, recognizing a common interest in improving access and affordability for vulnerable communities.

Digital Access



Action 21: Help residents to access free, high-quality online programming and activities.

- City Divisions and partners collaborated to meet community needs for accessible online activities during lockdown and to offset programming interruptions.
- www.toronto.ca/stayplaylearn is a one-stop-shop listing of free, high-quality virtual programs offered by the City of Toronto and trusted community partners. Since start of pandemic, average has been ~100 visits per day.
- Hosting activities available for all ages and specific age groups (e.g. seniors, youth).
- Offering a range of activities – fitness, sing-alongs, book clubs, music, museums, cooking, art, yoga, conversation groups, science experiments, senior men’s clubs, English lessons, dance, and more.
- Promoting via social media, direct contact with stakeholders, news release.

IN PROGRESS

COMMUNITY ADVICE

Increase awareness of the many free virtual programs available, and make it easier to learn about and access these all in one place.

Leads: Social Development, Finance and Administration, Digital Services, Seniors Services and Long-Term Care, Strategic Communications, Parks, Forestry & Recreation, Children’s Services, Economic Development & Culture, Toronto Public Library

Digital Access



Action 21 (continued): Help residents to access free, high-quality online programming and activities.

IN PROGRESS



Active Games	Fitness & Staying Active	Burn off some extra energy with these fun activities. Updated June 26, 2020.	User Choice	Everyone
Adapted and Inclusive Virtual Camp	Leisure & Learning	The Adapted and Inclusive Virtual Camp offers a weekly list of activities that you can do from the comfort of your home!	User Choice	Kids & Parents
Aga Khan Museum - MuseumWithoutWalls	Museums & Heritage	A collection of virtual content from the Aga Khan Museum.	User Choice	Everyone
AGO: The Collection (Online)	Museums & Heritage	A digital collection of the Art Gallery of Ontario's art and exhibits.	User Choice	Everyone
Alzheimer's Society of Toronto Active Living Program	Fitness & Staying Active	Programs for seniors with dementia and their caregivers including ballroom dancing, music therapy, Zumba and more.	60 Minutes	Seniors/Older Adults

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COMMUNITY ADVICE

Increase awareness of the many free virtual programs available, and make it easier to learn about and access these all in one place.

Leads: Social Development Finance & Administration, Digital Communications, Seniors Services and Long-Term Care, Strategic Communications, Parks, Forestry & Recreation, Children's Services, Economic Development & Culture, Toronto Public Library

Mental Health and Family Safety



Action 22: Support Torontonians experiencing stress, anxiety and isolation during the pandemic.

- Measures put in place to slow the spread of COVID-19 have created stress, anxiety and isolation for many residents, which may be compounded by financial loss and loss of critical supports. The City considers mental health support services to be essential for residents during this time.
- In April 2020, the City launched a TO Supports Mental Health Support Strategy, in partnership with 211 and mental health service agencies, to provide free, culturally grounded, telephone-based counselling in multiple languages.
- Participating agencies are specialized in supporting Black, Indigenous and racialized communities, seniors, children, youth and families, frontline workers, people living on a low income, and are available to anyone who is having a hard time during the pandemic.
- Residents can call 211 to receive support and a ‘warm referral’ to any agency. The integrated approach of this strategy allows the streamlining of referrals to the most appropriate mental health resources and enables the City and its partners to be agile and responsive to changing needs. This strategy complements and does not replace any existing mental health support models.
- 79,630 mental health contact sessions were completed (April 27-October 31, 2020).

Continued (1 of 2)

Lead: Social Development, Finance and Administration

IN PROGRESS

COMMUNITY ADVICE

Develop and implement a comprehensive plan to address negative mental health impacts of social isolation on Toronto residents.

Enhance funding and supports for frontline workers experiencing high levels of burnout and vicarious trauma.

Support community mental health agencies in advocating for further resources and supports.

Continued (2 of 2)

- Data demonstrates a significant increase in call volume, which has remained high at an average of over 882 per week.
- Mental health agencies have reported little to no changes to the frequently presented issues experienced by residents: anxiety, depression, isolation, stress, and income insecurity.
- Mental health service information is also available at <http://www.211toronto.ca/>.

Intergovernmental Requests and Actions

- City Council has requested the provincial government to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the impact of the pandemic on mental health and well-being to inform the need for additional supports or programs required to mitigate the associated harms.

Mental Health and Family Safety



Action 23: Respond to the heightened risk of family violence during the pandemic.

- Since the beginning of the pandemic, multiple hotlines across the city have had increased calls related to intimate partner violence and child abuse and elder abuse. These crimes are likely underreported, as pandemic conditions often pose additional barriers for people to get the help and support they need.
- The City has partnered with the community sector to create #HereToHelpTO, a campaign to raise awareness about family violence and connect residents to free crisis counselling, safety planning and emotional support.
- Since August 1, resources on the campaign webpages have been accessed over 1,700 times.
- On October 27th, government leaders and community partners participated in [#DressPurpleDay2020](#) to demonstrate support for children, youth and families facing violence, highlight available resources and share the message that they are not alone.

IN PROGRESS

COMMUNITY ADVICE

Provide additional housing options for those experiencing intimate partner violence.

Enhanced funding for victim support services.

Provide additional education and awareness of resources and supports, utilizing various tool to ensure broad reach.

Lead: Social Development, Finance and Administration

Children's Services

Action 24: Deliver safe, high quality child care during the pandemic, with additional supports for child care operators in communities most impacted by COVID-19.

- From March-June, the City operated 24/7 emergency child care centres for essential workers (no fee to parents; paid by Province); 394 children from 274 families were provided a placement.
- Since June 2020, 93% of licensed child care centres have re-opened, following guidelines and health and safety training developed with Toronto Public Health: 867 centres and 2,750 staff have been trained.
- The City is providing additional funding and in-person mentor visits to child care operators in COVID-19 hotspots, to support implementation of sound health and safety practices.
- 53 EarlyON organizations are providing virtual programming and telephone support. 19 organizations are planning to offer outdoor programming beginning in Nov-Dec 2020.



IN PROGRESS

Lead: Children's Services

Children's Services



IN PROGRESS

Action 25: Make child care policies flexible for families affected by COVID-19.

- Since June 2020, 93% of licensed child care centres have re-opened, following guidelines and health and safety training developed with Toronto Public Health: 867 centres and 2,750 staff have been trained.
- The City is providing additional funding and in-person mentor visits to child care operators in COVID-19 hotspots, to support implementation of sound health and safety practices.
- The City has revised child care fee subsidy policies to help families affected by COVID-19, including:
 - Extending the time allowed for families to receive child care while searching for a job.
 - Ensuring the 28 day modified Stage 2 roll back did not negatively impact clients' entitlement to a fee subsidy.
 - Increasing the number of sick days a child can be absent from child care.
 - Providing in-person services by appointment for clients who are not able to access services online.
 - 53 EarlyON organizations are providing virtual programming and telephone support. 19 organizations are planning to offer outdoor programming beginning in Nov-Dec 2020.
 - From March-June, the City operated 24/7 emergency child care centres for essential workers (no fee to parents; paid by Province); 394 children from 274 families were provided a placement.

Lead: Children's Services

Continued (1 of 2)

Continued (2 of 2)

Intergovernmental Requests and Actions

- City Council requested approval to plan and deliver emergency child care in the City of Toronto, fully funded by the province.
- City Council advocated for additional funding for sector stabilization and safe restart of child care and early years programs due to the impacts of COVID-19 and requested continued investments from provincial and federal governments to increase capacity, improve affordability and support a thriving workforce.
- In response to the Ministry of Education's five year review of the *Child Care and Early Years Act*, the City has also recommended:
 - Improved access by reducing structural barriers.
 - Making equity and inclusion a priority.
 - Advancing the availability of culturally responsive programs for Black and Indigenous children and families.
 - Controlling fees which are the main barrier to access for many families.
 - Raising fee income testing thresholds and indexing them to inflation.

Targeted and Enhanced COVID-19 Equity Measures*

Public health data demonstrate that some neighbourhoods are experiencing significantly higher rates of COVID-19 transmission, lower testing rates, and higher positivity rates for the virus compared to other places in Toronto.

Despite the high prevalence of COVID-19 here, there is also a high degree of testing "hesitancy".

In partnership with highly-trusted community-based partners, and building on the actions in *TO Supports*, Toronto has launched targeted and enhanced COVID-19 equity measures for higher needs neighbourhoods, in conjunction with Provincial Lockdown Orders for Toronto announced on November 23, 2020.

Targeted and Enhanced COVID-19 Equity Measures will:

- make public health information more accessible and relevant;
- increase access to COVID-19 testing; and
- provide critical financial and health supports.

These measures are flexible and can be rapidly directed to different neighbourhoods and populations as required, based on findings from the data.

These measures will be launched first in **northwest** and **northeast** Toronto and will be refined for:

- a Black-led COVID-19 health equity approach;
- an Indigenous-led COVID-19 health equity approach; and
- a COVID-19 health equity approach led by and for people with disabilities.



Targeted and Enhanced COVID-19 Equity Measures

The City is collaborating with community and health services partners, residents and employers in communities disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 to share public health information, improve access to COVID-19 testing, help people to follow public health guidance and provide critical supports to individuals who test positive.

EXPANSION OF TESTING SITES

1. Increase mobile testing
2. Increase transportation to testing sites
3. Increase the number of testing sites
4. Extend testing site hours

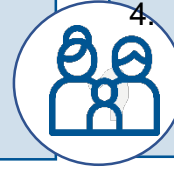
Partners: Ontario Health/LHIN



EDUCATION & ENGAGEMENT

1. Targeted outreach, case management and supports
2. Equip residents with masks
3. Add “family approach” to voluntary isolation sites
4. More capacity on busy TTC bus routes

Partners: Community Agencies, TTC



EVICCTIONS & EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

1. Advocate for residential eviction prevention
2. Advocate for income supports
3. Advocate for newcomer access to COVID-19 services and supports

Partners: Ontario & Canada



(FUTURE) COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION

1. Leverage targeted enhanced equity measures to implement the City’s COVID-19 immunization strategy (in development through the EOC)

Partners: Community Agencies



Toronto Public Health Hotline

8:30 a.m. – 8 p.m.

Call if you have questions about COVID-19.

Translation is available in multiple languages.

Telephone: 416-338-7600

TTY: 416-392-0658

Email: PublicHealth@toronto.ca

www.toronto.ca/COVID-19/TOSupports

