

TO Supports: COVID-19 Equity Action Plan

Presentation to Toronto Board of Health

Giuliana Carbone

Deputy City Manager, Community and Social Services

December 14, 2020



Key Messages

1. City relies on an interdependent relationship with a strong **community-based not-for-profit sector** to meet residents' needs, now and always.
2. City (working with community partners) has demonstrated powerful **creative and collaborative capacity** to respond to residents' needs during this pandemic.
3. Our effectiveness in addressing COVID-19 inequities depends on **ongoing commitments from other orders of government.**

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.

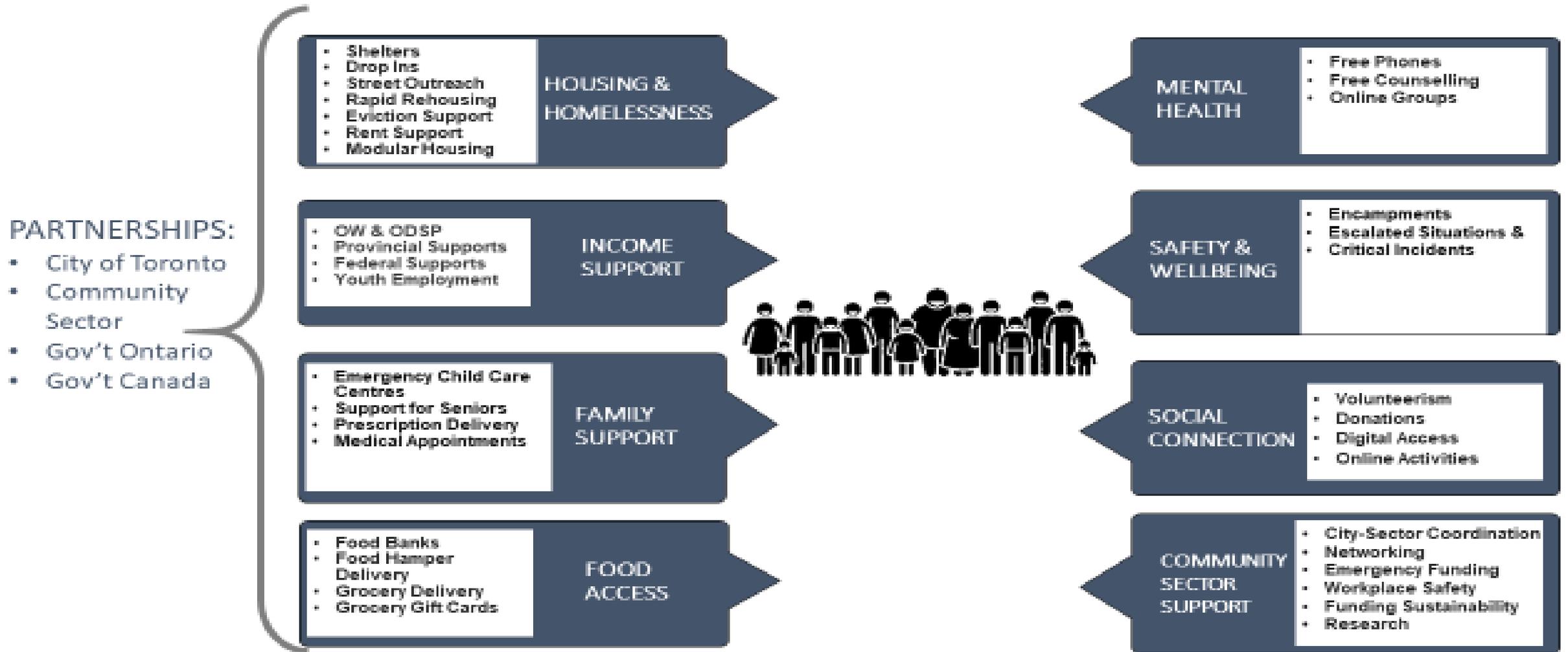
To support Torontonians who have been hardest hit by COVID-19 and to stop the virus spread, the City is taking urgent action on multiple fronts, in strong collaboration with community partners.

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.



PRELIMINARY COVID-19 Equity Response Framework (March 2020)



TO Supports Action Areas (December 2020)



Selected Innovations and Impacts, March-November 2020



Food Access Program:

- 60,000 student families received \$50 grocery cards through repurposing of student nutrition grants
- 16,000 households/46,000 individuals served at emergency food banks in 12 Toronto Public Library locations.
- 33,000 food hampers and 500,000 prepared meals prepared and delivered



Mental Health Support Strategy:

- 79,630 mental health contact sessions completed (free, telephone-based, culturally grounded counselling)
- Residents can access supports by calling 211 and will receive a 'warm link' to a counsellor
- Service coordination and awareness campaign re: heightened risk of family violence during pandemic



Free Wifi and Devices:

- Free WiFi enabled in shelters, long-term care homes and in 6 large apartment buildings in low income neighbourhoods (25 in total to be completed)
- 100s of free high-quality online activities and programs for residents of all ages to "stay at home / play at home / learn at home"

Selected Innovations and Impacts, March-November 2020



Community Sector Support

- \$10.2M secured for emergency funding, prioritizing agencies that are: Indigenous-led; Black-led; support persons with disabilities
- 15M in emergency donations directed to 200+ community agencies for: PPE, technology, food, hygiene supplies (via DonateTO and T.Public Library Foundation)
- With United Way Greater Toronto, 400+ agencies organized into clusters to provide local responses



Rapid Rehousing; Shelter Enhancements

- 40 new temporary shelter locations opened to create physical distancing
- 1,000+ people helped to move indoors from encampments
- 2,500 people successfully connected to permanent housing (a 50% increase compared to the same time last year)
- PPE supplied to community-based shelter and homelessness services operators
- Winter Service Plan adds 560 spaces (shelter capacity and supportive housing)
- Modular Supportive Housing (110 units by Q4 2020; 140 additional in 2021)



Community and Public Health Access:

- Opened Canada's first COVID-19 voluntary isolation centre
- Opened COVID-19 recovery and isolation space for homelessness clients
- Continue to allocate City facilities for emergency uses (e.g. COVID-19 testing, flu shot clinics, food banks, temporary shelters, sanitation facilities)
 - 20 recreation centres used for pop-up COVID-19 test sites
 - 20+ recreation centres used for pop-up flu shot clinics
- TTC buses re-purposed for mobile testing and transportation to testing

Targeted COVID-19 Equity Measures

The City of Toronto is collaborating with community and health services partners, residents and employers in hotspot areas to share public health information, improve access to COVID-19 testing, and provide critical supports to individuals who test positive.

This integrated set of **Targeted COVID-19 Equity Measures** includes: 1) Measures to **Expand Testing Sites**, (2) Measures to support Community **Education and Engagement**, and (3) measures to address the **Threat of Eviction and Improve Access to Emergency Assistance** (income support). They lay the groundwork for (4) **Immunization** measures in the near future.

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

Partners: Community Agencies



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



IMMUNIZATION

1. Leverage Targeted Equity Measures to implement the City’s immunization strategy (in development through the EOC)

Partners: Community Agencies



Thank you.

