

Ontario Public Health Standards Risk Management Reporting for 2022

Date: March 7, 2022
To: Board of Health
From: Medical Officer of Health
Wards: All

SUMMARY

This report provides the Board of Health with an update on the risk management reporting that is part of the Ontario Public Health Accountability Framework. It outlines risks and challenges facing Toronto Public Health (TPH) in 2022, after two years of pandemic response efforts, and identifies the mitigation efforts TPH is undertaking to respond.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Medical Officer of Health recommends that:

1. The Board of Health receive this report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact resulting from the adoption of the recommendation in this report.

DECISION HISTORY

On March 8, 2021, the Board of Health received its annual report about Risk Management as required by the Ontario Public Health Accountability Framework. <http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2021/hl/bgrd/backgroundfile-164741.pdf>

On November 22, 2019, the Board of Health received its annual report about Risk

Management as required by the Ontario Public Health Accountability Framework.
<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2019.HL12.2>

On November 19, 2018, the Board of Health received its first annual report about Risk Management as required by the Ontario Public Health Accountability Framework.
<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2018.HL29.3>

COMMENTS

The Ministry of Health (the Ministry) [Public Health Accountability Framework](#), which came into effect in January 2018, outlines the requirements to which Boards of Health are held accountable. One of the requirements is for public health units to have a formal risk management framework. To satisfy this requirement and keep the Board of Health informed, Toronto Public Health (TPH) submits a risk management report to the Board of Health annually.

For the 2021/2022 reporting period, TPH has identified the following six significant risks based on the frequency of occurrence and potential impact on strategic objectives:

- **Unpredictability of the Pandemic:** The unpredictability of the COVID-19 pandemic presents challenges for resuming pre-pandemic public health programs and services, as TPH resources are primarily focused on pandemic response efforts.
- **Capacity to Address Worsening and Emerging Public Health Issues:** TPH's primary focus for the last two years has been (and continues to be) responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and executing an effective vaccination campaign. As such, there has been limited staff capacity to properly identify and address: pre-pandemic, worsening and emerging public health issues. The TPH workforce, are also experiencing COVID-19 fatigue further increasing the risk that public health issues other than COVID-19 will worsen or not be identified in as timely a manner as warranted.
- **Challenges Securing Public Support and Adherence to Public Health Measures and Advice** Frustration and disagreement with the public health measures put in place to mitigate and/or control the spread of COVID-19 is being expressed and displayed by certain segments of the population. The spread of misinformation may result in individuals not getting vaccinated, unnecessarily delaying vaccination, or not following other public health measures.
- **Shortage of Skilled Staff:** Staff are retiring or seeking other more lucrative employment opportunities, especially in acute care settings, which is contributing to a talent shortage and loss of organizational history.
- **Staff Fatigue due to COVID-19 Response:** The strenuous operational demands associated with COVID-19 response have taken a significant toll on TPH staff,

further limiting TPH's capacity to address existing and emerging public health challenges.

- **Developing Public Health Landscape:** The future governance of and funding for public health units is unclear at this time, and are expected to evolve further as the Province of Ontario and local public health units consider priority areas of focus as the demands of the COVID-19 pandemic subside.

To minimize the impact of the risks identified, a range of mitigation strategies and processes have been put in place, including but not limited to:

- communicating and collaborating with local, provincial and federal governments and other stakeholders;
- surveillance of COVID-19 developments at the provincial, national and international jurisdictional levels;
- commencing discussions with organizations whose staff are routinely engaged in high-stress situations for extended periods on recovery strategies;
- providing consistent and continuous communication to keep the public informed on the COVID-19 response, variants of concern and their impact on the population, vaccination efforts and coverage, the importance of public health measures;
- advocating for continued and increase resources and support to mitigate financial and/or social impacts of public health measures; and
- implementing succession planning initiatives, supporting staff development and training, and adopting new recruitment strategies.

In addition to the specific actions outlined above, TPH will maintain its core focus on the ongoing identification of public health issues, as well as, the development of evidence-based interventions and responses that address these issues and support the health and well-being of Torontonians. While the direct delivery of health care services generally falls outside of TPH's mandate and scope of work, TPH will remain engaged with health care system partners who deliver services to the community and support positive population-level health outcomes in Toronto.

While the Ministry requires public health units to submit annual risk management reports, this requirement is not related to health unit funding. Toronto Public Health will continue to use a risk management framework to identify and manage risks to achieve its objectives and to support effective and efficient resource allocation.

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SIGNATURE

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