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REPORT
General Committee

For Information

DATE: March 11, 2010

REPORT TITLE: **ACCELERATED IMMUNIZATION RISK MITIGATION STRATEGY PROJECT UPDATE**

FROM: Janette Smith, Commissioner of Health Services
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OBJECTIVE

The objective of this report is to update Regional Council on the successful completion of the Accelerated Immunization Risk Mitigation Strategy and to outline future directions for maintaining immunization coverage rates in all Peel schools and daycares to protect the health of children against vaccine preventable diseases.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- As a result of the Immunization Risk Mitigation Strategy student immunization coverage rates increased from 43 per cent to 92 per cent. (Peel Public and Dufferin-Peel Catholic School Boards).
- Fifteen per cent of students (approximately 19,300) needed additional immunizations to meet the requirements under the *Immunization of School Pupils Act, R.S.O. 1990 (ISPA)* and an additional 110,000 had inaccurate or incomplete records which were updated.
- The authorization for funding by Regional Council in July, 2008, was critical to achieving success of this project (see Tables 1 and 2).
- The project met objectives on time and on budget.
- A process improvement review was undertaken to improve existing processes and look for efficiencies. Results to be reported at Audit Committee.
- In order to maintain these achievements, and to complete this process for French-Language schools, daycares, and private schools, additional resources will be requested in the 2011 budget.

DISCUSSION

1. Background

The *Immunization of School Pupils Act, R.S.O. 1990 (ISPA)* requires Peel Public Health to maintain accurate and up-to-date immunization records for all students in Peel schools. In previous reports to Regional Council in 2006 and 2007, Peel Public Health informed Regional Council of the serious public health risk resulting from not having student immunization records up to date. As a result of the experience with the measles outbreak in April, 2008, Peel Public Health proposed the Accelerated Immunization Risk Mitigation Strategy, July 3, 2008, in order to decrease this risk.

On July 3, 2008, Regional Council approved funding for the acceleration of the Immunization Risk Mitigation Strategy. The Strategy involved the review and updating of immunization records of all students in the Peel District School Board (PDSB) and the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board (DPCDSB) by June 30, 2009. The proposed outcome was to increase the protection of the health of children and prevent spread of disease by increasing immunization coverage rates. In addition to sustaining the gains of the improved coverage rates of pupils in the two large Peel Boards, the remaining French-Language schools, private schools and daycares require screening and updating records imminently to provide further protection of school pupils in Peel Region.

2. Outcomes

The Immunization Risk Mitigation Strategy achieved its goals on target and on time. Peel Public Health has worked closely with the two major school boards and a broad spectrum of Regional staff across many business units to successfully complete the screening of all student immunization records from September, 2008 to June, 2009.

At the end of screening in June, 2009, 92 per cent of the screened students had up-to-date immunization status for diphtheria, tetanus, polio, measles, mumps, and rubella. These coverage rates are sufficient to achieve herd immunity; the "tipping point" whereby outbreaks are prevented and the community is protected.

The ability to concentrate resources to address this well-defined priority was critical to success. Tables 1 and 2 outline the accomplishments and services provided to Peel citizens.

Table 1 – Accomplishments

Student Population (Two Major Boards of Education)	Schools in the Two Boards of Education	Immunization Records Reviewed	Incomplete Immunization Records (52%) Updated	Students Requiring Additional Immunizations	Coverage Rate Achieved
243,194	379	243,194	128,200	19,300	92%

Table 2 – Direct Client Services Provided

Notices Mailed to Parents/ Students	Telephone Calls Received	Clients Seen at Drop-in Desk	Records Received On- line	Records Received by Fax	Foreign Records Translated
237,400	48,642	6,124	38,621	114,800	153

The immunization records screening process involved all 379 schools in the Peel and Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Boards and a total screening population of 243,194 students. Students who did not respond to a series of notices mailed to their home were issued an order of school suspension from the Medical Officer of Health. Approximately four

per cent of those who received notices (4,956) were eventually suspended. Of those students who were suspended, the majority returned to school within a few days. Peel Public Health worked closely with families and school board staff to ensure that students who were suspended were able to return to school as quickly as possible.

A comprehensive communication strategy was implemented to increase the cooperation and support of important partners. Key messages were promoted throughout the community with timely use of the media and advertisements to increase the awareness of reporting immunizations. Health professionals, mainly physicians, were provided with comprehensive information packages to support their patients in meeting the requirements to attend school.

The www.immunizepeel.ca website was continuously updated to facilitate the ease of citizens obtaining important information and reporting their immunizations. Translated information was made available in 26 different languages on the website as well as in the information packages sent to families and through school board officials.

For those students with limited access to physicians, school based clinics were offered in both school boards. Services provided in these clinics included immunization record review, counseling by public health nurses and administration of immunizations required to attend school.

3. Maintaining Immunization Records in the Future

Peel Public Health is dedicated to maintaining the achievements of the Accelerated Immunization Risk Mitigation Strategy and is actively working towards expanding efforts to include immunization records screening of daycares, private schools, and schools in the French-Language School Boards.

On an annual basis, the immunization records of all schools in the Peel District and Dufferin Peel Catholic District School Boards will be reviewed to ensure that records are up-to-date and complete. A strategy has been developed to establish key partnerships with daycares, private schools and French-Language School Boards to initiate the review of immunization records for those children and students.

Having completed this major project, it is essential that immunization record screening be maintained as a high priority program. As new students register annually (21,000 in the two major school boards) and students become due for additional immunizations (i.e. boosters), coverage rates will go down unless screening efforts continue on an ongoing basis. As reported to Audit Subcommittee in June 2009, a process improvement initiative was undertaken to improve existing processes, and look for efficiencies. With the experience of the recent screening efforts and the results of the process review, there is a full understanding of the resources required to maintain this current level of screening; to expand screening to include daycares, French-Language and private schools; and to manage future population growth. Underestimating the resources required would seriously jeopardize the sustainability of the current success and once again place Peel residents at an unnecessary risk for outbreaks of serious vaccine preventable diseases.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

In July, 2008, Regional Council approved the proposal submitted by Peel Public Health to accelerate the Immunization Risk Mitigation Strategy and the release of $498,394 from the working fund reserve for the January to June, 2009 costs. From July to December, 2008, a total of $579,865 was funded through Peel Public Health's approved 2008 operating budget. From

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January to June, 2009, the approved amount of $498,394 from the working fund reserve and an additional $116,110 from the Public Health approved 2009 operating budget allowed for successful completion of the project, as well as some additional immunization services.

Through the process review, some areas for improvement were identified and the detailed results will be reported to Audit Committee in spring 2010. With the identified efficiencies taken into account, the review also identified that additional staff resources are required and they will be requested as part of the 2011 Public Health budget.

CONCLUSION

The completion of the Immunization Risk Mitigation Strategy is a significant accomplishment for Peel Public Health and the Region as a whole. Immunization is a foundational public health standard enshrined in legislation that must be maintained if Peel citizens are to continue to enjoy protection from preventable diseases that can cause significant morbidity and mortality. With the ongoing support of Regional Council, Peel Public Health is committed to ensuring that the records maintenance and screening processes that have been proven effective in achieving the required coverage rates continue to be a priority program.

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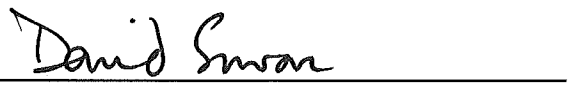
Approved for Submission:



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