

For Information

DATE: December 9, 2010

REPORT TITLE: **PRENATAL HEALTH MATTERS: EXPANDING ACCESS TO PRENATAL EDUCATION THROUGH E-LEARNING**FROM: Janette Smith, Commissioner of Health Services  
David L. Mowat, MBChB, MPH, FRCPC, Medical Officer of Health**OBJECTIVE**

This report will provide an overview of a planned expansion to Peel Public Health's prenatal education program through an e-learning program.

**REPORT HIGHLIGHTS**

- Current challenges facing Peel Public Health's prenatal education programs are the increased demand from an increasingly diverse population combined with reduced availability of community/hospital based prenatal programs. This has resulted in waitlists for this important service.
- A pilot of a new e-learning prenatal program addresses some of these challenges by offering an alternative way to receive prenatal education.
- Long term strategies include collaboration with Peel community partners to further advance service reach and to ensure quality prenatal education is consistent and accessible across the Region of Peel.

**DISCUSSION****1. Background**

Pregnancy creates a critical opportunity and powerful motivation for expectant parents to learn about important health topics including lifestyle choices, infant development and parenting skills. Prenatal education helps families make informed decisions about their pregnancy, birth experience and transition to parenting.

Currently, prenatal education offered through Peel Public Health is free. Classes are offered evenings and weekends in five locations. There are approximately 10 to 12 couples per class with a total reach of 1,729 registered clients in 2009 (1595 adults, 134 teens).

Based on an analysis conducted in 2007, we were reaching approximately 31 per cent (4516) of Peel's expectant clients. This data is based on a 2007 birth rate of 14,500. Peel Public Health reached 16 per cent, while our community partners (including hospitals and private practice) reached 15 per cent.

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Access to prenatal classes is being challenged by increased demand and birth cohort (approximately 17,000 births expected in Peel in 2010), a decline in hospital based 'fee for service' prenatal education programs and an increasing immigrant population.

As a result of these challenges, Peel Public Health has identified the need to expand access to prenatal education and work in collaboration with community partners to coordinate prenatal education services throughout the Region of Peel.

The 2008 launch of the website [www.pregnantinpeel.ca](http://www.pregnantinpeel.ca) was the first step in broadening access. Building on this work, the next step has been to provide an e-learning prenatal education program.

### **2. Pilot E-Learning Prenatal Program: The Gift of Motherhood**

An environmental scan of existing e-learning prenatal programs across North America was completed and a licence to use "The Gift of Motherhood" was purchased. The program was adapted to reflect Peel's population. It is free to clients and provides information by both text and audio along with video clips, graphics, animated illustrations and quizzes that appeal to a computer savvy and diverse population. Participants call to register and receive a 90-day access code and handout package. They login at the website [www.prenatalhealthmatters.ca](http://www.prenatalhealthmatters.ca) and can send questions by email to a Public Health Nurse. They are referred to the Family Health Contact Centre for ongoing access to health information, resources and support.

An online Feedback Survey measures knowledge gain, client satisfaction and reach. The pilot e-learning prenatal program began in January 2010 and early results are very positive.

### **3. Future Plans**

A program evaluation is currently underway. This evaluation will guide revisions to the program in preparation for offering the program to all families in Peel. The e-learning format may be complemented with a half or full day prenatal forum for hands-on learning and parent networking. Long term plans include collaboration with community partners, who are expressing great interest in this initiative (e.g. Local Health Integration Networks, Health Nexus, Peel Childbirth Educators Network, Midwives, Trillium Health Centre, Credit Valley Hospital, Brampton Civic Hospital and Community Health Centres).

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The offering of the e-learning prenatal program is a cost efficient method to expand the delivery of prenatal education to families who prefer to access information through a web-based program.

- The initial costs to develop and launch the website landing page and to conduct the pilot evaluation: \$850
- The annual costs for the E-Learning Prenatal Education Program include:
  - License Fee: \$1750 CAD for the first year and \$1200 CAD for each additional year
  - Registration Fee: \$25 per client

These funds are allocated for in the Health Services operating budget.

Based on a prenatal service cost analysis conducted in 2008, traditional prenatal education program costs an average \$143.70 per client. These rates do not include supportive program materials (e.g. brochures, handouts), supplies or program marketing costs.

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**CONCLUSION**

The e-learning prenatal program is a cost-effective and efficient way to increase access to quality prenatal education. The long term collaboration with community partners is an exciting opportunity to deliver integrated prenatal health education across the Region of Peel.



Janette Smith  
Commissioner of Health Services



David L. Mowat, MBChB, MPH, FRCPC  
Medical Officer of Health

**Approved for Submission:**



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D. Szwarc, Chief Administrative Officer

*For further information regarding this report, please contact Joan Davison at extension 2771 or via email at [joan.davison@peelregion.ca](mailto:joan.davison@peelregion.ca).*

c. Legislative Services  
*MC* Manager, Financial Support Unit (FSU)