

# COVID-19 and Peel's Community Safety and Well-being Plan 2020-2024

## Context

Since 2018, organizations in Peel have been working to create Peel's first Community Safety and Well-being (CSWB) Plan.

The Plan is guided by the Ministry of the Solicitor General's Community Safety and Well-being Planning Framework, which defines community safety and well-being as the ideal state of a sustainable community where everyone is safe, has a sense of belonging, opportunities to participate, and where individuals and families are able to meet their needs for education, health care, food, housing, income, and social and cultural expression.

The areas of focus for this first iteration of the Plan include **family violence, mental health and addictions, and systemic discrimination**. The Plan examines the needs of youth and families in our community across all three areas. The first iteration of the Plan will follow a 4-year time frame and will be reviewed and updated annually, as required, to reflect the emerging needs of Peel residents. The impacts of COVID-19 on the community reinforced the urgency of supporting residents within the three areas of focus.

## COVID-19 and Impacts to the Peel Community

The global pandemic of COVID-19 and the provincial state of emergency declared in March 2020 severely impacted communities in Peel through widespread closures, job losses, increased anxiety and uncertainty and drastic changes in how we live our daily lives. Most recently, our community partner CMHA Peel-Dufferin, estimated a 52% increase in the volume of crisis calls it has received alone. This surge in demand underscores that the pandemic has only exacerbated existing demand yet, only one in three Peel residents are reported to be able to receive the treatment that they need. There will be significant long-term impacts on mental well-being particularly for children and youth that will need to be considered moving into recovery.

Key priorities of the Community Safety and Well-being Plan are to attend to the challenges of family violence, mental health and addictions and systemic discrimination which have only been intensified by the impact of COVID-19. That is why the Plan has pivoted to re-orient some of the work to an immediate response to address such issues.

## Family Violence

With increased social isolation and access to services, partners across the Region of Peel quickly came together to form the Family Violence COVID-19 Response Table. With over 50 members, this table identified vital areas of support required for individuals experiencing family violence. Out of the response table, five sub-groups formed focused on areas related to court supports, working with men, supportive parenting and family development, data as well as violence against women sector gaps and shelter.

On February 13, 2020, Regional Council unanimously passed a motion to undertake a family and intimate partner violence campaign in partnership with the City of Brampton, City of Mississauga, Town of Caledon, Peel Regional Police and other key stakeholders. An advisory and partner working group have been collectively working together to provide subject matter expertise to launch the education and awareness campaign on November 25, 2020 also known as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. With the rise in gender-based violence since the pandemic, this campaign is imperative for raising awareness of help seeking options.

## Mental Health and Addictions

Advocacy efforts continue to be at the forefront of regional activities. Peel Regional Council is calling on the province for an equitable funding model that responds to population growth, represents our diverse community needs and provides services to support residents in their time of need. The Region continues to highlight that without addressing funding, Peel will not be able to achieve the resourcing that is required to meet the growing needs of Peel's diverse community which inevitably is likely to increase due to the impacts of the pandemic. Furthermore, in July 2020, Peel Regional Council voted unanimously to explore ways to reduce the role of police in mental health crises when appropriate. The council motion also calls to increase the number of Mobile Crisis Rapid Response Teams operating in Peel.

In alignment with the goals of the CSWB Plan, Peel Regional Police, CMHA Peel Dufferin, United Way Greater Toronto, City of Mississauga, City of Brampton and other local partners are working together to develop a situation table model in Peel. Situation tables provide a multi-sectoral risk intervention model for vulnerable individuals that are at elevated risk for a crisis situation. Situation tables help front line staff from police, justice, health, and social service sectors to identify vulnerable people and collaboratively and rapidly connect them to services before they experience a negative or traumatic event. This builds on learnings from Toronto's successful situation table model.

## Systemic Discrimination

Recent events in the community have brought to the forefront the longstanding impacts of systemic discrimination, systemic racism and the urgent need to address anti-Black racism. The disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on racialized communities and other marginalized groups further demonstrate the existing inequities in our communities. While there has been more mainstream coverage of these issues, community members and advocates have long called for action to eradicate systemic racism and discrimination. Many CSWB partner organizations have shared statements on anti-Black racism and are confronting it within their own organizations and in the community. In June 2020 the City of Brampton, City of Mississauga and the Region of Peel declared anti-Black racism a crisis in Peel. There is urgency in the community and across organizations in Peel to work together to immediately address these issues.

Building on Peel Region's Community Response Table, a number of community partners came together to establish the Anti-Black Racism and Systemic Discrimination committee. Over 40 agencies regularly attend. The committee is focused on advocacy, recognizing systemic discrimination and anti-Black racism is prevalent in different systems and sectors with an initial focus on policing, health and education. Work in these areas will continue to move forward, identifying how emerging needs of the community can be reflected in CSWB related strategies as well as identifying linkages between response activities and the strategies contained in the CSWB Plan.

## Conclusion

Peel's Community Safety and Well-being (CSWB) Plan takes a comprehensive and holistic approach to planning that intersects with many sectors. Moving forward it is imperative that the Community Safety and Well-being Plan remains flexible to respond to emergent issues in the community as we have faced this past year with COVID-19. Through the pandemic the resiliency of the community has been evident as many people, agencies and governments have come together to support one another. This is a testament to the collaborative and unified partnerships that exist to ensure Peel is a safe, inclusive and connected community where all residents thrive.

[peelregion.ca/community-safety-wellbeing-plan](https://peelregion.ca/community-safety-wellbeing-plan)