

16. Community Health Services

[The community] set up a twenty-four hour telephone bank ... newspapers and placards urged people to call "Filbert 100" twenty-four hours a day for information and referrals. It transformed kitchens in public schools—which were closed – into soup kitchens that prepared meals for tens of thousands of people too ill to prepare their own. It divided the city into seven districts and, to conserve physicians' time, dispatched them according to geography, meaning that doctors did not see their own patients.

The Great Influenza, J.M. Barry

For purposes of OHPIP, community health services include:

- family health teams
- physicians practices
- other primary health care providers and agencies
- community care access centres
- home care providers
- community support services
- community mental health centres
- other community-based health services.

For long-term care services, see Chapter 19.

During a pandemic, there will be intense pressure on community health services. Although people will be directed to contact Telehealth or to go to a community assessment centre, many will still rely on their family physician for information and care. About 53% of the people who develop influenza will require an outpatient visit. Home care will also be asked to provide additional services to reduce the pressure on hospitals and increase their capacity to care for those who become critically ill. Over this same period, community health care providers will be expected to maintain key services for existing clients.

16.1 Objectives

- To maintain key primary and community care services during a pandemic.
- To support people with influenza who can be cared for at home.
- To identify community health services that can be reduced or curtailed in the event of an influenza pandemic.

16.2 Supplies and Equipment

Supplies and equipment required for an influenza pandemic are an issue for many primary care practitioners in terms of cost. Smaller services also have less capacity to source supplies in an emergency.

To ensure that primary care providers have the supplies required to protect staff and patients, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has supplied all primary care practices and community health centres with an emergency infection control kit that includes a supply of:

- hand sanitizer
- masks
- gloves
- eye protection
- disposable gowns
- surface cleaner
- disinfectant wipes

- information sheets that can be posted in the office or clinic.

16.3 Continuity of Operations

To help physician practices and community agencies plan for a pandemic, Ontario has developed a pandemic preparedness checklist. See 16A: Community Health Services Tools.

16.3 Next Steps

Ontario will work with primary and community care providers to develop more detailed plans for community health services during a pandemic.