Council Direction:
Not applicable

Information:

Public Health Services provides a wide range of programming for schools, with the goal of promoting health for school-aged children and youth, and their families.

School Program staff, in particular Public Health Nurses, work with school principals, school staff, students, school councils, parents and the community to assess and prioritize needs, then plan and implement strategies to address the issues. Public Health Nurses are supported in this work by a variety of staff, including Nutritionists, Dietitians, Physical Activity Specialists and Health Promotion Specialists, and Public Health Nurses working in specialized areas. In addition, many other staff, such as Public Health Inspectors and Tobacco Enforcement Officers, provide specific services to schools. Appendix A provides a brief description of the various services provided by Public Health Services to our community in cooperation with local schools. Further description of many of these services can be found in the guides provided to schools, which will be available for interested Councillors at the Board of Health meeting.

In recent years, the School Program has increasingly emphasized a Health Promoting School approach. The purpose of the Health Promoting School approach is to build health knowledge, skills and behaviours in the cognitive, emotional, social and behavioural domains and to assist in enhancing educational outcomes (International Union for Health Promotion and Education (IUHPE), 2005). Public Health Nurses work with Health Action Teams, comprised of parents, students and school staff.

Currently 30 schools in Hamilton are utilizing the Health Promoting School service delivery model. The selection of schools to receive the Health Promoting School approach involves the consideration of the following criteria:
• social determinants of health
• EDI (Early Development Instrument) ranking of Public Schools
• compensatory ranking of HWCDSB schools
• HWDSB ranking of schools
• rates of high risk behaviour
• assets
• capacity (support from the whole school community)
• readiness and
• receptivity

Although all these criteria are important when considering a school, perhaps the most important in terms of implementation and sustainability is that there is support and commitment from the school principal and all members of the school community as this model is a whole school approach.

The Health Promoting School strategy provides a comprehensive four-pronged approach which includes: instruction, health and support services, supportive social environments and healthy physical environments. This approach has been proven to be effective in changing health behaviours and has been endorsed by the World Health Organization, Health Canada, and the European Network of Health Promoting Schools (1992). The Health Promoting School model builds relationships and fosters health and learning not only in the students but in the larger community by working with the entire school, parents of the children/youth and the community.

One successful Health Promoting School project in Nova Scotia, currently funded by Health Canada, is the Annapolis Valley Health Promoting School Project (AVHPSP) entitled “Making the Healthy Choice the Easy Choice” (AVHPSP, 2005). Initially eight schools in the regional school board adopted the Health Promoting School model in order to make it easier for students to make healthy choices with regards to physical activity and healthy eating as one way to contribute to the prevention of chronic diseases, in particular Type 2 diabetes (AVHPSP, 2005).

Research from this project to date is showing that the students in the Health Promoting Schools are making healthy food and physical activity choices more often, when compared to other students in Nova Scotia. “Rates of overweight and obesity among students from schools that are part of the AVHPSP were significantly lower (17.9 overweight; 4.1 % obese) than rates among students from schools without a nutrition program (32.8% overweight; 9.9% obese)” (Veugelers and Fitzgerald, 2005). From the parent and teacher surveys the project has found that while 70% of parents/teachers agree that it is primarily the family’s responsibility to promote healthy eating and physical activity, 90-95% of parents/teachers also agree that schools should play a role. These changes are having a positive impact on the health of the students which in turn lead to enhanced learning. (AVHPSP, 2005).

New for 2006/07 School Year
The school program, like other Public Health programs, undertakes continuous improvement activities to review the impact of programming, and determine what changes in programming are needed based on developments in evidence and programming from other levels of government. New plans for the 2006/2007 school year include the following:

• Piloting Incredible Years parenting groups which target parents who have school aged children 5-9 years of age (12 week parenting program) and continuing to implement Parents’ Corner parent drop-in groups to increase parent knowledge and skills
• Piloting Safety on the Go (injury prevention program for grade 6-8) and Get High on Life Not on Drugs (substance abuse prevention program for grade 6-8) in Health Promoting Schools
• Implementing the approved Family Life Program for HWDSB special needs secondary school students
• Offering annual education on anaphylaxis to all schools to support the implementation of Sabrina’s Law and contributing to a safer environment for children with severe allergies

In addition to this annual renewal, a more comprehensive review process will be completed by the Spring of 2007, in time for the 2007/08 school year. The goal of the review is to ensure that services offered within the School Program are optimally aligned with available evidence regarding best practices, community needs, provincial and municipal mandates and stakeholder preferences.

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Medical Officer of Health
Public Health Services
Appendix A – Public Health Services Provided Through Community Schools

Healthy Kids Newsletter
This health information resource for elementary teachers is issued five times per year, in paper format and electronically.

Teacher website
Complementing consultation provided by Public Health Nurses, this website provides electronic access for teachers to health information and curriculum support material.

Parenting CD
Includes health articles for parents for use in elementary school newsletters.

Healthy Living Hamilton School Awards
Supported by the Healthy Living Hamilton coalition, these awards promote school participation in a range of programs addressing physical activity and healthy eating.

Child and Adolescent Services
Therapists from this program go into schools upon request to provide single session consultation and counselling to children and youth and their parents.

Children in Need of Treatment (CINOT) Dental Program and Dental Indices Survey (DIS)
As per provincial protocol, children through grade 8 are screened to determine the need for dental care that requires referral for diagnosis and subsequent follow up. The C.I.N.O.T. program offers coverage to those children with need who would otherwise not access care for reasons due to financial hardship and lack of any insurance coverage. The D.I.S. results will be used to establish the priority of schools, which is submitted annually to the Ministry of Health.

Bug Busters Head Lice Clinics
Low income families may access screening, treatment demonstrations and receive at a low cost medicated shampoo and combs for head lice, and information to assist them in securing medical care, dental care, food banks, housing, low cost clothing, and bike helmets as needed.

National Child Day
An annual community-wide education campaign that reached 2500 Hamiltonians in 2005. Activities were offered throughout Hamilton by: community partners (eg. Art Gallery activities and free admission to some exhibits, Dofasco), City of Hamilton sites (eg. free use of recreational facilities) and churches. Advertising for the event occurred through the use of media (print, radio, and T.V spots), schools, website, and other agencies in Hamilton.

Sexual Health Network
This community network provides growth and development booklets for parents of school-aged children in grades 5-8, the “I’m Worth the Wait” media campaign and an annual parent conference on a relevant sexual health education topic for parents.

IDEAs Program
IDEAs (Informed Decision Empowering Adolescents) assists the development of decision making skills for middle school students, through the use of secondary school student peer mentors. Currently 12 elementary schools receive the program and peer mentors are involved from 8 area high schools.

Public Health School Asthma Pilot Project
The purpose of this 100% provincially funded project, also in place at specific locations elsewhere in Ontario, is to work towards “asthma friendly” schools for elementary school-aged
children. Since 2003, thirty-seven elementary schools have participated. Asthma friendly schools have processes in place to identify and manage students with asthma; ensure easy access to medication; reduce asthma triggers; and collaborate with families, health care professionals and school personnel.

Early Childhood Health Promotion
Family Health staff provide a variety of screening clinics (eg. multidisciplinary clinics at OEYC sites, car seat clinics) and presentations on various topics (eg. growth and development, nutrition, home safety at OEYC and Parent Link), as well as consultation and referral for younger elementary students and their families.

Infectious Diseases and Immunization
Staff conduct screening of children’s immunization records and follow-up to ensure up-to-date vaccination; promote and provide Hepatitis B vaccine to eligible school-aged children; consult regarding reportable and communicable diseases; respond to outbreaks; and provide community flu clinics at some high schools.

Food Safety
Public Health Inspectors provide school nutrition program guidelines and inspections, food handler certification programs for high school students, hand washing information packages for elementary schools and safe food handling presentations for high schools.

Tobacco Use Prevention
The Tobacco Control Program provides schools with support such as: information regarding the Smoke Free Ontario Act, and support in the follow-up of violations, through the Tobacco Hotline; an opportunity for local high schools to be awarded tobacco control programming grants of up to $1000/school annually via the 100% Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy and to participate in the Teen Tobacco Summit; and employs 21 youth Peer Leaders on a part-time basis to work closely with middle and high school students and youth in the community towards curbing the incidence of tobacco use among youth.