Guelph & Area Ontario Health Team

MAY 2020 NEWSLETTER

For the past six weeks, partners of the Guelph and Area Ontario Health Team (G&A OHT) have rallied to meet the needs of our community during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our efforts have pivoted from OHT system design, planning and strategy to critical needs assessment and responsive tactical mobilization. The G&A OHT response has been swift and responsive to community need, and we are so proud of how our community has mobilized in response to this public health emergency. Here are some examples of remarkable G&A OHT COVID-19 efforts so far:

COVID-19 Assessment Centre

On March 23, our collaborative local health system launched the COVID-19 Assessment Centre, first on Delhi Street and now at the Victoria Road Recreation Centre. Key partners include Wellington Dufferin Guelph Public Health, Guelph Wellington EMS, Guelph General Hospital and the Guelph Family Health Team. Now, six weeks later, more than 3,000 people have been seen at the clinic, and all staff and residents at many of our retirement and long term care homes have also been tested. While the clinic continues to function, we are looking ahead to assess the role the clinic can play to meet the needs of the community.

COVID-19 Testing in our Community

In an ongoing effort to protect our most vulnerable community members in institutions, WDG Public Health is working in collaboration with the GW EMS and the G&A OHT to bring COVID-19 swabbing to them. Residents of Guelph and Area long-term care homes, retirement homes and other congregate care settings, and vulnerable community members who are unable to access the assessment centre for testing are being tested in their place of residence. This includes individuals who require testing for COVID-19 prior to admission to a long-term care or retirement home.

Physician Re-Deployment

With Guelph and area physicians and practices converting to primarily offering virtual care, Guelph and area physicians have committed to other system roles, should they be needed. In addition to the 45 physicians taking shifts at the COVID Clinic, Guelph and area physicians have volunteered to be re-deployed to GGH for ED support, ALC/In-Patient support, Well Baby/FBU support and ED diversion strategies. Physicians also continue to support system planning for LTC, palliative care and family practice support

Human Resources Deployment (Staffing) Strategy

Early in the COVID-19 pandemic, we anticipated the need to leverage our collective health human resources to meet the COVID-19 related need of our community. To do so, we worked across organizations to develop a "Human Resource Re-deployment Inventory," a tool that allowed us to identify existing system resources that could potentially address corresponding staffing needs elsewhere in the system. We continue to refine and rely on this inventory as a tool to support each other and the needs of our community at this time.

Supported Isolation Centre

In late March our community's health and social service organizations came together to plan, design and launch Guelph's Supported Isolation Centre (SIC), a space for homeless community members to isolate when they have symptoms of COVID-19. Initially located at the Welcome in Drop In Centre, the SIC has since moved to Loyola House at Ignatius Centre, a space that has the capacity to support up to 48 presumed or confirmed COVID-19 positive individuals.

WDG Public Health played a key role in supporting partners to design the model, which provides nonmedical wraparound care approach to address additional and complex health concerns, enabled through redeployed staff members from the Guelph Community Health Centre, Stonehenge Therapeutic Community, CMHA Waterloo Wellington, Wyndham House and the County of Wellington.

"This is an uncertain time for everyone and having a safe place to isolate will make a significant difference in our community, especially among our most vulnerable community members," says Jennifer MacLeod, Manager at WDG Public Health. "Fortunately, we live in a community filled with strong community partners who have mobilized around so many key parts of this complex pandemic we find ourselves in." Media coverage of the site's expansion, which profiles the strong partnerships that are alive and well in the G&A OHT, can be viewed here

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Strategy

Accessing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) has been a challenge throughout the COVID-19 crisis. Through our collective efforts, we were able to launch a community-wide PPE donation campaign, and create an inventory and distribution hub to redistribute the incoming supplies through the Guelph CHC. This donation hub has complemented provincial PPE inventory (available through GGH) and has allowed us, in a very coordinated way, to meet the needs of our health care partners in their efforts to keep their staff and residents safe. **For any PPE related needs or questions, please contact Emmi Perkins.**

Here4Health

We know that this is a very difficult time to be working in health care. The stress, worry and exhaustion experienced by health care workers can take a toll on everyone's mental health. Recognizing this pressure, partners at CMHA Waterloo Wellington has launched a new service, Here4HealthCare, to provide free, immediate mental health and addiction care to front line healthcare workers. The Here4HealthCare service pathways prioritize the needs of healthcare workers and first responders and links them to confidential, free psychiatry, crisis services, psychotherapy, support groups, as well as online virtual care and resources. To access this new service, simply go to: **www.here4healthcare.ca** to access the web enabled self-referral form, or a phone number to call. A new online resource library is also available anytime via this website. In the words of CMHA WW, "We know it is an exceptionally busy and stressful time for our healthcare workers. You just need to know that we are here for you. Today. Tomorrow. And in the weeks and months to come."

Here4Help

Here4Help is a new online repository of tools and techniques to manage the stresses of dealing with COVID-19. Resources are categorized according to:

- Children, Youth & Parents/Guardians
- Adults
- Seniors and caregivers
- Employers and employees
- Front line health care

In a world with information overload, the Here4Help site is a library of curated, best practice based resources that are refreshed regularly. We hope that this site provides our community with information they need to self-care and support others through these challenging times. This website is a complimentary support to the direct service that is offered by CMHA WW and our community partners. If you know of anyone who is in crisis or who needs service, please direct them to 1-844-HERE247. You can visit Here4Help at its own website: www.here4help.ca, or though the CMHA WW Website: www.cmhaww.ca

Support for Congregate Care Settings

Partners of the G&A OHT are working together to support the needs of retirement homes, long term care homes and other congregate settings in Guelph and Area. The G&A OHT team has offered PPE, staffing support and assistance with Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) to ensure these settings have what they need to keep some of our most vulnerable residents, and their staff, protected. Partners have a daily huddle to discuss the status of each of our homes and to identify a coorindated plan to address their needs. Additionally, a team of educators from hospitals, long term care homes and public health provides virtual or on-site PPE and IPAC coaching and mentoring to meet the needs of each home.

We don't know exactly what the next weeks, months or years will bring for our community. The Guelph and Area OHT will continue to evolve and anticipate how, through our collective partnership, we can most effectively respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Thank you to our committed, collaborative partners with whom we can continue to work in new ways to address the needs of our community.

Be well and stay strong.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact Emmi Perkins -- emmi.perkins@guelphfht