

Executive Summary

COVID-19 PANDEMIC: COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT

Over March and April 2020, PQCHC's Community Health Services department conducted a series of wellness checks in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Food security, computer access and internet access were the main areas of focus but residents had the opportunity to speak to other needs they might have.

There were differences in how this information was collected and recorded across programs, limiting the analysis. Also, this assessment provides a snapshot in time of need but we know as the pandemic continues, people's situations will change. The common themes identified, however, can provide direction for future needs assessments so that our programs and services are continuously accountable and responsive to the communities we serve.

FOOD INSECURITY

While many of our families were food insecure prior to the pandemic, food security became an urgent need with the loss of employment, the reduction of work hours, daycare and school closures and the closing of non-essential programs that provided food during programming.

Out of 852 successful contacts, 392 households were identified as food insecure. Many of the comments from the records used to inform this assessment mentioned access to food being an "emergency" for many families.

COMPUTER ACCESS

Access to technology is essential to being an active and functioning member of today's society and in light of COVID-19 is now vital for many families. Devices must also be well-functioning and have up-to-date software to keep up with this new virtual way of working, learning and consuming.

Out of 986 success contacts, 298 households require computer access. Of those households who require access, the majority (156 households, or 52%) were those with school-aged children. Seniors also have high technology needs, as access to computers or devices was required for social connection, receiving services (many of which have moved online) and to purchasing food and other essentials.

INTERNET ACCESS

Technology is only a gateway to communication, information and services if you have internet access. Out of 1,011 successful contacts, 111 households require internet access. Although the need for internet access is significantly lower than the other needs addressed in this assessment, the households without access are greatly disadvantaged and more socially isolated.

OTHER NEEDS

A variety of other needs were communicated through the wellness checks. The ones listed below, and described in more detail in the report, either had a lot of mentions or were reasonably linked to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Navigating services

- Mental health and anxiety
- Employment
- Other (non-categorized)

ASSESSMENT BY COMMUNITY

Specific information and insight on each community is provided. This information is not meant to compare communities, but rather provide a glimpse into their unique strengths and needs.

Demographic details and information on food insecurity, computer and internet access, as well as other needs is provided for Bayshore, Britannia Woods, Foster Farm, Michele Heights, Morrison Gardens, and Pinecrest Terrace, Eva Taylor Place, Starflower Lane and Winthrop Court.

ASSESSMENT BY PROGRAM

A breakdown of the needs is also provided by program, including: Employment Services, Foster Farm Community House, Morrison Gardens Community House, Pinecrest Terrace Community House, The Healthy Aging of Multicultural Seniors, Michele Heights Community House, Pathways to Education/Equity in Education, Somali Youth Support Project, System Navigation, Together We Can Youth Mentorship, and United Sisters.

COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES RESPONSE TO COVID-19

From the outset, PQCHC designated medical services and food security as essential. Community Health Team staff were redeployed to support these essential services by acting as screeners and greeters at our main location and by supporting the community houses with organizing and distributing food to residents accessing the food banks. Staff have actively outreached and conducted wellness checks with the participants of their programs and continue to connect them to our System Navigators.

The report provides more detail on how the department is working to support residents with food security, COVID-19 information and resources, technology and internet access and through a move to virtual services.

LEARNINGS

COVID-19 has brought as many challenges as it has learnings and opportunities to carry forward. Specific learnings on effective engagement in virtual programming and services are detailed as well as learnings on internal and external collaboration.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE NEEDS ASSESSMENT WORK

The results of this needs assessment have supported our focused response to COVID-19. We also see this assessment as a pilot for future ones that will help us understand and respond to changing needs and opportunities in our communities. Some recommendations for future assessment work include:

- Standardized questions;
- Standardized template and script for frontline staff;
- Standard use of comments and interviews to better understand concerns, challenges and learnings;
- Clear communications on the purpose of the wellness checks and use of information; and
- Greater collaboration across the Centre and community