



Overview

In Nova Scotia, Public Health works with others to understand the health of communities and takes action — together with partners and community members — to protect and improve the health of the population.

The results of public health action are all around us: from safe drinking water and smoke-free places, to laws that prohibit unsafe activities, to promoting health through policy, education and access to support. We strive to understand what affects our health and to take action with our partners to address risks and promote healthy environments.

We carry out our work across the Capital Health district with a budget of \$10.5 million and approximately 120 staff members. We are proud to invest in the development of both learners and employees to contribute our knowledge to the broader scientific and health communities locally, nationally and internationally.

Public health works out of offices in Dartmouth, the Eastern Shore and Windsor. There are staff based in every high school in the district, and we deliver our programs in homes, family resource centres and other community settings.

What We Do

We aim, first and foremost, to generate knowledge through surveillance efforts, evaluation and research. We use this knowledge to inform all of our work, including:

Protecting the health of communities

- Monitoring, investigating and preventing further spread of disease outbreaks and potential threats in the air, water, food and environment around us.
- Preventing disease through vaccination clinics for school-aged youth, and educating and supporting community partners.
- Providing vaccines to physicians and other vaccine providers.
- Providing travel health counseling and vaccination through the International Travel Clinic.

Promoting healthy communities

- Working with academic, government, education and community partners to conduct research, promote healthy public policy and reduce health risks.
- Participating in local initiatives to “level the playing field” so that health disparities are reduced, including work on food security, housing and other economic and social policies.
- Keeping communities informed of key public health issues.

Supporting families with infants and children

- Identifying and assessing the needs of new parents and families and matching public health and community resources to appropriately meet those needs.
- Providing education and support to pregnant women, new moms and their families to prepare for birth and promote healthy child development.
- Working with Family Resource Centres and other partners to provide longer-term support to families facing additional challenges.

Promoting the health of children and youth

- Supporting the health and well-being of children and youth through partnerships with schools and community groups to foster healthy environments.
- Engaging youth and community partners through high school-based Youth Health Centres by promoting positive outcomes including school completion, safer sexual behaviours and healthy relationships, and to reduce risks associated with substance use and other risk-taking behaviours.

Public Health Services Core Functions

POPULATION HEALTH ASSESSMENT AND SURVEILLANCE • HEALTH PROTECTION • HEALTH PROMOTION • DISEASE AND INJURY PREVENTION



Learning and Responding

It was through the lens of “understanding and acting together” that we embarked on the following projects in 2013-2014.

PARTNERS FOR SEXUAL HEALTH:

When reported cases of syphilis among men who find casual and/or anonymous hook-up partners online started increasing, Public Health Services collaborated with several community groups (including the AIDS Coalition of NS, Capital Health’s MOSH unit, IWK/Capital Health’s PrideHealth program, Dalhousie University’s Gender and Health Promotion Studies Unit, the Halifax Sexual Health Centre, the NS Advisory Commission on AIDS, and the NS Rainbow Action Project) to create an innovative social marketing campaign to raise awareness about the infection’s symptoms, testing and treatment. With the support of THINK Marketing, several dynamic campaign products were developed including: posters, mirror decals and an informative micro-site (TheHardFacts.ca) featuring an easy-to-download blood test form to make testing simple. Through this valuable health partnership network an enhanced understanding of the outbreak developed and we believe that this project will serve as a model for future health promotion activities.

For more: TheHardFacts.ca

POPULATION HEALTH STATUS REPORT:

Capital Health’s first Population Health Status Report (PHSR) was based on a single premise: geography matters. Both space and place are important health determinants. The PHSR describes how our health is influenced by where we live and that underlying socioeconomic and material disparities may prevent some of us from being as healthy as others. By understanding the health status of our population, we can contribute to developing effective public policies that positively impact the health of communities and reduce health disparities.

Read the report: <http://www.cdha.nshealth.ca/public-health/population-health-status-report>

PARTNERS FOR HEALTHY COMMUNITIES:

Healthy Canada by Design - Coalitions Linking Action and Science for Prevention (CLASP) is a partnership of national health, planning and transportation organizations, regional health authorities, nongovernmental organizations and universities applying public health policy to land use and urban planning. Working with Halifax Regional Municipality, the ultimate goal of Public Health Services’ CLASP project is to develop a better understanding of the connection between health outcomes and planning policy in Capital Health. Over the past year we initiated a region-wide Food Assessment, laying the ground work for the development of a region-wide Food Strategy; produced a draft Complete Streets Policy, recommending streets be designed, constructed and maintained with the safety and comfort of all users’ modes and abilities in mind; and developed a set of community design standards that contribute to better connected, more accessible and safer communities. Through these projects we’re increasing Public Health Services’ content and planning expertise, and adding further capacity for cross-sector healthy-built environment policy work.

For more: www.hcbd-clasp.com

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