

**Report to
Rapport au:**

**Ottawa Board of Health
Conseil de santé d'Ottawa
19 October 2015 / 19 octobre 2015**

**Submitted on October 9, 2015
Soumis le 9 octobre 2015**

**Submitted by
Soumis par:
Dr./ D' Isra Levy
Medical Officer of Health/Médecin chef en santé publique**

**Contact Person
Personne ressource:
Sherry Nigro, Manager / Gestionnaire
Health Promotion and Disease Prevention/ Promotion de la santé et prévention
des maladies
Ottawa Public Health/Santé publique Ottawa
613-580-2424, ext./poste 28971 *Sherry.Nigro@ottawa.ca***

Ward: CITY WIDE / À L'ÉCHELLE DE LA VILLE File Number: ACS2015-OPH-HPDP-0004

**SUBJECT: OTTAWA PUBLIC HEALTH'S IMMUNIZATION STRATEGY: UPDATE
ON EVERY CHILD, EVERY YEAR**

**OBJET: STRATÉGIE D'IMMUNISATION DE SANTÉ PUBLIQUE OTTAWA :
MISE À JOUR SUR POUR TOUS LES ENFANTS, TOUS LES ANS**

REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Board of Health for the City of Ottawa Health Unit receive this report for information.

RECOMMANDATIONS DU RAPPORT

Que le Conseil de santé de la circonscription sanitaire de la ville d'Ottawa prenne connaissance du présent rapport à titre d'information.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ottawa Public Health (OPH) has faced numerous challenges with immunization surveillance over the past decade. Consequently, OPH adopted a risk based approach where efforts would focus on subsets of the school age population deemed to be at the highest risk of being under-immunized.

In 2015, OPH adopted a new [Immunization Strategy](#) that includes a priority area “Every Child, Every Year”, which aims to improve surveillance of immunization status by reviewing the immunization records of all children attending school and licensed daycare centres.

In April 2015, OPH initiated enhanced activities to work towards achieving full immunization surveillance. An initial report showed that out of the 150,000 school-aged children in Ottawa, the records of approximately 63,000 were not up-to-date.

OPH’s work to date has revealed that:

- Verifying immunization records has been a significant challenge;
- Most parents are unaware of their duty to report immunizations to the health unit; and
- Significant resources are associated with full surveillance

Even with OPH’s outreach to thousands of parents, the immunization records of many school-age children are still incomplete. A report of the new provincial web-based information system, Panorama, estimates that that approximately 30 percent (50,000) of the 150,000 records for the 2015/2016 cohort of school-aged children are still not up-to-date. Based on historical surveillance activities, this is a typical finding and validates the need for progressive enforcement as a final measure to ensure the most complete data on local immunization status. To ensure school-age children’s immunization records are up-to-date and to more fully protect all students from the risks of vaccine preventable diseases, OPH intends to implement the Every Child, Every Year Plan for the 2015-2016 school year.

The Every Child, Every Year 2015/2016 Plan includes:

- 1. Communication:** OPH will continue to work with partners to communicate the importance of vaccination, the responsibility of parents to report new immunizations to OPH, and OPH’s planned surveillance activities.
- 2. Surveillance:** The surveillance process will include the collection of immunization records, assessment of the immunization statuses, notification to parents if records

are not up-to-date and ultimately suspension from school if records remain incomplete.

- 3. Immunization:** In an effort to make vaccines accessible to all families, “catch-up clinics” will be offered for students missing required vaccines and who are unable to access an immunization provider.

RÉSUMÉ

Ces 10 dernières années, Santé publique Ottawa (SPO) a dû composer avec de nombreux obstacles à la surveillance de l’immunisation. Pour y remédier, il a adopté une approche fondée sur les risques en concentrant ses efforts sur les sous-groupes d’enfants d’âge scolaire jugés les plus à risque d’être sous-immunisés.

En 2015, SPO a adopté une nouvelle [stratégie d’immunisation](#) dont un des volets prioritaires, « Chaque enfant, chaque année », vise à améliorer la surveillance du statut vaccinal par l’examen des dossiers d’immunisation de tous les enfants inscrits à l’école ou dans un service de garde agréé.

En avril 2015, SPO a redoublé d’effort pour reprendre la surveillance complète de l’immunisation. Un premier rapport montre que sur les 150 000 enfants d’âge scolaire à Ottawa, environ 63 000 ne possèdent pas un dossier à jour.

Jusqu’ici, le travail de SPO a révélé que :

- la vérification des dossiers d’immunisation s’avère très difficile;
- la plupart des parents ignorent qu’ils sont tenus de signaler l’immunisation de leurs enfants au bureau de santé;
- la surveillance complète exige d’importantes ressources.

Malgré les activités de sensibilisation menées par SPO auprès de milliers de parents, les dossiers de bon nombre d’enfants d’âge scolaire restent incomplets. Selon un rapport tiré de la nouvelle base de données provinciale en ligne, Panorama, on estime qu’environ 30 % (50 000) des 150 000 dossiers qui forment la cohorte de 2015-2016 sont toujours incomplets. Si l’on se rapporte aux activités de surveillance menées par le passé, ce chiffre est habituel, et il confirme la nécessité de prendre des mesures progressives pour enfin assurer l’exactitude des statistiques sur l’immunisation. Afin d’assurer la mise à jour des dossiers d’immunisation des enfants d’âge scolaire, et ainsi de mieux protéger tous les élèves contre les risques de maladies évitables par la vaccination, SPO compte mettre en œuvre le plan « Chaque enfant, chaque année » pour la période scolaire 2015-2016 .

Le plan « Chaque enfant, chaque année » 2015-2016 comprend les éléments suivants :

1. **Communication** : SPO continuera de collaborer avec ses partenaires pour informer les parents de l'importance de la vaccination, de la responsabilité qu'ils ont de signaler tout nouveau vaccin et des activités de surveillance prévues par SPO.
2. **Surveillance** : Le processus de surveillance comprendra la collecte des dossiers d'immunisation, l'évaluation des statuts vaccinaux, l'envoi d'avis aux parents en cas de dossiers incomplets et, en dernier recours, la suspension de l'école si le dossier n'est pas mis à jour.
3. **Immunisation** : Dans le but de rendre l'immunisation accessible à toutes les familles, des cliniques de « rattrapage » seront ouvertes aux élèves sous-immunisés qui ne peuvent accéder à un fournisseur de vaccins.

BACKGROUND

As reported to the Board of Health (BOH) in [April 2015](#), Ottawa Public Health (OPH) has faced numerous challenges with immunization surveillance over the past decade, including an antiquated information system, frequent changes to the publicly funded immunization schedule and insufficient growth in resources. In 2014, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) began the implementation of a new web-based information system, Panorama, the immunization and vaccine inventory modules of which are now operational in Ottawa. In addition to the information system change, in 2014 the regulations under the *Immunization of School Pupils Act (ISPA)* were amended to include new vaccines. Students attending schools in Ontario are now required to be vaccinated against nine diseases (mumps, measles, rubella, diphtheria, tetanus, polio, pertussis (whooping cough), varicella (chickenpox) and meningococcal disease). Varicella vaccine is only required for children born in 2010 or later.

Despite efforts to maintain immunization records, like other health units in Ontario, OPH has experienced challenges in ensuring the integrity of these records. OPH adopted a risk based approach where surveillance efforts focused on subsets of the school age population deemed to be at the highest risk of being under-immunized.

[OPH's Immunization Strategy](#) priority area "Every Child, Every Year" implemented in June 2015 aims to improve surveillance of immunization status by reviewing the immunization records of all children attending school and licensed daycare centres, beginning with surveillance of school-age children. The surveillance process includes the collection of immunization records, assessment of the immunization statuses and notification to parents if records are not up-to-date. A record that is not up-to-date may

reflect that the child is under-immunized or that immunizations are up-to-date but have not been reported to OPH.

Progress to Date

In April 2015, OPH initiated enhanced activities to prepare the Immunization Program to move towards full immunization surveillance. An initial Panorama-generated report showed that out of the 150,000 school-age children in Ottawa, approximately 63,000 attending school in 2014/2015 did not have up-to-date records. Given the concurrent implementation of Panorama and amendments to the *ISPA*, the process of ensuring OPH has accurate records of student's immunization status is complex. Considerable work is required to import, reconcile and ensure the accuracy of transferred records, and to notify parents that their child's immunization records are not up-to-date.

OPH's work to date has revealed that:

- **Verifying immunization records has been a significant challenge**

Reviewing individual records coupled with irregular vaccine histories has been a labour-intensive operation. Enhanced activities included:

- Reviewing Panorama records of all 150,000 school-aged children;
- Use of automated dialing technology to contact families of the 63,000 students whose records were not up-to-date;
- Inputting and assessing records received online, by fax, by mail and through the immunize.ca app;
- Verifying information on demographics, vaccines and reconciling duplicate records;
- Handling up to 640 calls per day from parents and physicians' offices; and
- Filling an increased number of vaccine orders from physicians' offices and other immunization providers.

- **Most parents are unaware of their duty to report immunizations to the health unit**

OPH has focused on raising awareness on the responsibility of parents to report their children's immunization records, the need for timely reporting and the many mechanisms that parents can use to report immunizations including online, fax, phone, mail and a mobile app. When contacted, most parents were receptive to discussing their child's immunization status and were unaware of their duty to report immunization records. Enhanced activities included:

- Outreach to parents through schools, newsletters, automated voice mails and public health nurse contacts;
- Traditional media (print, television, radio);
- Communications with physicians and advertisement in doctors' offices;
- Partnership with immunize.ca, an app that Ottawa parents can use to track and report their children's vaccines; and
- Extensive promotion through the Parenting in Ottawa and Ottawa Public Health websites and Facebook pages.

- **Significant resources are associated with full surveillance**

Resources associated with efforts to move towards full surveillance on all school children have been considerable and will require sustained resource allocations. To date, OPH has utilized internal reallocation of resources to address the short term pressures of the catch-up phase. OPH applied for provincial funding to cover the extraordinary resources required for the catch-up phase of Every Child, Every Year and in September 2015 received an increase in base funding from the province.

Enhanced activities included:

- Approximately 40 staff deployed from April to September 2015 to respond to calls from parents and to update immunization records in Panorama. Casual nursing staff and agency data entry personnel were utilized with OPH staff from various teams assisting with the enhanced response;
- The use of an automated dialer system that was able to generate 6000 calls per day to assist in reaching the large volume of parents; and
- Staff planning and executing communications, monitoring and tracking progress, and undertaking staffing and logistics activities.

As noted previously to the Board, in [OPH's Immunization Program report](#), there are challenges associated with the functionality of Panorama, including reporting functions which would facilitate better monitoring of both the enhanced response and ongoing program evaluation.

DISCUSSION

Even with OPH's outreach to thousands of parents, the immunization records of many school-aged children are still not up-to-date. A Panorama report for the 2015/2016 cohort of school-aged children estimated that approximately 30 percent (50,000) of the 150,000 records are still not up-to-date. Based on historical surveillance activities, this is

a typical finding and validates the need for progressive enforcement as a final measure to ensure the most complete data on local immunization status.

To ensure school-age children's immunization records are up-to-date and to more fully protect all students from the risks of vaccine preventable diseases, OPH intends to implement the Every Child, Every Year Plan for the 2015-2016 school year.

The Every Child, Every Year 2015/2016 Plan includes:

1. Communication

OPH will continue to work with partners such as physicians, school boards and schools to communicate the importance of vaccination in our community, the responsibility of parents to report new immunizations to OPH, and OPH's planned surveillance activities.

2. Surveillance

The surveillance process for immunization records includes assessment of the immunization status of the individual child, notification to the parents if the record is not up-to-date, and ultimately suspension of the child from school if OPH does not receive evidence that the child has been immunized. Further to the telephone calls that many parents and guardians received over the past six months, OPH will be sending mailed notifications to parents whose children's immunization records are still not up-to-date.

Parents will be asked to report back on the child's immunizations within a prescribed period. The mailing of these first written notices will be staggered between late October 2015 and early January 2016. Schools will provide additional information to parents through their parent communication channels.

Children whose records remain outstanding after the first written notification will receive a second notice by mail advising that they will be suspended from school under the authority of the *ISPA*, unless proof of immunization is received within the subsequent 7 days. OPH will notify schools of the students for who required immunization information is still outstanding. School principals will suspend students on a pre-determined date for up to 20 school days, to be rescinded when proof of immunization is received. School suspensions will be staggered between early December, 2015 and March 2016. Students with documented exemptions for medical or philosophical reasons are not subject to suspensions; however, in the event of an outbreak, they may be excluded from school while there is risk of transmission.

OPH will work with school boards and schools to implement the enforcement component of surveillance in the following order (the Ottawa Catholic School Board (OCSB), le Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario (CEPEO), le Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est (CECCE) and finally the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB). The staggered approach will take into consideration OPH's capacity to respond to parents and school curricula (avoiding exam times and provincial testing dates).

3. Immunization

In an effort to make vaccines accessible to all families, "catch-up clinics" will be offered for students missing required vaccines and who are unable to access an immunization provider. Clinics will be run weekly in east and west locations of the city from early November 2015 to early March 2016.

Next Steps

Work to date reinforces the need for ongoing collaboration with physicians, school boards, schools and parents as Ontario's immunization recording system is dependent on parents reporting their child's immunizations to local public health units. Enhanced activities and the efforts for moving toward achieving a full cycle of surveillance will inform an annual work plan for Every Child, Every Year. The increase in provincial base funding will be used for staffing (data entry and immunization assessment) as well as communication technologies.

RURAL IMPLICATIONS

Every Child Every Year applies to all schools in the City of Ottawa.

CONSULTATION

OPH has been in regular contact with the four local school boards: the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, the Ottawa Catholic School Board, le Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario (CEPEO) and le Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est, as well as various provincial workgroups to ensure the feasibility of the Every Child Every Year plan.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal impediments to receiving the information in this report.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no risk management implications to receiving this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Funding for the additional requirements of the program has been provided from an increase in base provincial funding as outlined in the 2015 Operating Q2 status report.

ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS

There are no accessibility implications to receiving this report.

TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS

There are no technology implications to receiving this report.

DISPOSITION

This report is provided for information.