

**MEMO / NOTE DE SERVICE**

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TO: Board of Health for the City of Ottawa Health Unit

DESTINATAIRE : Conseil de santé de la circonscription sanitaire de la ville d'Ottawa

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FILE NUMBER: ACS2018-OPH-PCS-0003-IPD

SUBJECT: IMPLEMENTATION OF A NEW ELECTRONIC PUBLIC HEALTH  
RECORDS SYSTEM

OBJET : MISE EN PLACE D'UN NOUVEAU SYSTÈME DE DOSSIERS DE SANTÉ  
ÉLECTRONIQUES

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide the Board of Health with an overview of the proposed new Electronic Public Health Records (EPHR) system and Ottawa Public Health's (OPH) implementation of same.

**BACKGROUND**

Ottawa Public Health's [2017 Operating Budget report](#), approved by the Board on December 5, 2016, talked about the need to implement an electronic medical records system. Specifically, the report stated that this initiative would "support unique public health business requirements; mitigate existing risks related to client safety, technology

failure and the achievement of operational efficiencies; provide better data analytics capabilities; improve the client experience; and ultimately contribute to the improvement of population health in Ottawa”.

On April 3, 2017, the Board of Health received a report titled “[Quality Improvement Plan for 2017-2020](#)”. This report talked about the Quality Improvement Plan’s (QIP) four focus areas, one of which was “Modernize systems in public health by leveraging information technologies, digital communications and evidence-based practices”. Specifically, this section of the report outlined its aims as follows:

- Leverage efficient information technologies and digital communications to provide clients with a more rewarding service experience and improve access to services and information about health-related issues, inspections, and outbreaks;
- Enhance internal capacity to gather, share and use quality data and evidence-based practices; and
- Optimize business practices related to medical supplies and equipment.

OPH’s [2018 Operating Budget report](#), approved by the Board on December 11, 2017, identified “electronic public health records” as an anticipated 2018 pressure.

## **DISCUSSION**

An Electronic Public Health Record (EPHR) is a health record under the custodianship of a health information custodian (HIC) from a public health agency that holds all of a client’s history collected by that organization - a digital version of the paper chart. An EPHR system generally includes functionality such as client management, workflow management, reporting, staff management, scheduling, financial management, communication management, information management and inventory management. An EPHR system uses structured data standards, which facilitate interoperability with eHealth Ontario and Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (Ontario) assets and electronic health record solutions used by other Public Health Units in Ontario.

The vision for an EPHR solution is to adopt a client-centric approach whereby the various OPH programs share one client record (a client can include an individual, family, group or community). When a client encounters one of OPH’s programs for the first time, a new client record is created. Program staff are able to access the client record to document the client interaction utilizing the necessary assessment and notes section based on their user role. If necessary, a client can be referred from one program

area to another through a workflow engine. If the same client receives a discrete service from staff in another program, a search can be performed to identify if a client record already exists.

Once the client record is located in the system, staff can document the interaction based on their user group's necessary assessments and notes section. Access to information by various program staff is controlled by security functions and role-based permissions. Ultimately, the client has one record, with interactions documented by staff from different programs, which the client and other health care providers involved in their care, will be able to access through a secure client portal function.

### **EPHR Implementation**

Implementing an EPHR at this time allows OPH to continue transforming the way services are delivered by building on the momentum of the recent organizational alignment and the introduction of new public health standards and protocols. It also aligns well with Ontario's Digital Health Initiatives Strategy and provides an opportunity to work collaboratively with a number of other public health units that are seeking to implement a similar solution.

### **NEXT STEPS**

OPH staff will continue to work with municipal partners in Procurement, Information Technology and Legal Services to finalize the purchase, installation and implementation of the new EPHR system.

### ***'Original signed by'***

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