

Notes of September 30, 2016

Meeting of the Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE) and

Council of Ontario Medical Officers of Health (COMOH)

**STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS**

**BETWEEN PUBLIC HEALTH UNITS AND DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARDS**

Attendees (CODE and COMOH): Miriam Klassen and John Crocco (c-chairs), Joseph Picard (by teleconference), Larry Hope (by teleconference), Jim Costello (by teleconference), Valerie Jaeger, Rosana Salvaterra, Janet DeMille, Lynn Noseworthy, Eileen de Villa, Ian Gemmill.

Regrets: Phyllis Eikre

Attendees (Support to the Committee): Heather Peters, Danielle Lupoi, Eileen Silver Jennifer Munro-Galloway, Arkadi Toritsyn, Ministry of Education; Jane Cleve, Ministry of Children and Youth Services; Justin Wood, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care; Ken Bain, CODE.

Guests: Mackenzie Slifierz and Nicole Dupuis, Winsor-Essex County Health Unit (by teleconference).

1. Co-chair Dr. Miriam Klassen welcomed everyone to the meeting. Committee members introduced themselves, as did attendees in support of the committee.
2. Miriam asked committee members to review the March 9, 2016 notes and to offer their comments. Having received no comments, Miriam declared that the notes were accepted as distributed. Miriam asked the committee members to review the agenda and to recommend any additions or deletions. Members requested that: CODE-COMOH MOU, OPHEA Communication, University of Ottawa Research Project Update, Dental Health Promotion and Legalization of Marijuana Update be added.
3. Miriam introduced Mackenzie Slifierz and Nicole Dupuis, Winsor-Essex County Health Unit. The presenters, by teleconference, identified that the sector has not focussed on surveillance as well as it could and that it will take resources to do this better in the future. Automated surveillance capacity across the province would be very helpful. Often the results of surveys and related data sources are only available to the partners who pay for the access. EDU reps identified that every two years, boards are required to conduct a Safe School survey and acknowledged that the results are not generally available and are only helpful to boards in their planning. There was an understanding that schools are inundated with survey requests and must be very careful when deciding in which surveys they should participate. EDU staff identified that the Ministry is only aware of EDU-driven surveys or those surveys that involve EDU support funding. Nicole, on behalf of Windsor-Essex County Health unit, is trying to create an inventory of surveillance tools and has engaged with CODE and EDU and will engages stakeholders in a forum leading to recommendations in early 2017.
4. Arkadi Toritsyn, EDU and Jane Cleve, MCYS provided a presentation entitled: “Supporting Children and Youth with Autism Spectrum Disorder in Ontario”. The ministries have set up a joint committee with representatives from EDU and MCYS. The presenters noted that while the prevalence of children with ASD is on the rise, there has not been an increase in the last year (relying on American data). ASD can be identified in children aged 12-24 months (even younger children can show signs) and an early play-based intervention with parents can turn the trajectory around. A four-ministry initiative has created an early screening tool to flag early signs and to prompt parents to seek further interventions. Committee members recommended that connections be made with Healthy Babies/Healthy Children initiative as the tool might be able to be used earlier. The presenters concluded by affirming that the ultimate goal is to prepare graduates with the skills needed to move to employment or post-secondary educational opportunities.

Eileen Silver highlighted that the Premier’s mandate letter to the Minister of Education identified that promoting student wellbeing is a strategic priority. EDU has been engaging with partners (eg. Ministries of Health, Culture and Sport, Tourism) regarding the strategy along with developing measures to determine success of the well-being strategy. EDU will release a discussion document in April 2016 that will begin provincial conversations and discussions with internal stakeholders, leading to engagement of students, broader internal stakeholders and external stakeholders. The hope is to identify the conditions, supports and resources needed to promote student wellbeing. The Ministry Advisory Committee will be co-chaired by Mary Gordon and Bruce Ferguson. In November, there will be a provincial sector event that will be followed by seven regional sessions including indigenous stakeholders. Committee members commented that student wellbeing is an excellent opportunity for collaboration as members of CODE and COMOH have a shared interest in this priority.

Jennifer Munro-Galloway reported that Daily Physical Activity (DPA) has been unevenly implemented across the province and it is time to revisit the policy. Barriers to implementation included teachers’ lack of confidence about how to integrate DPA into the schedule, a lack of facilities and a perception of a lack of time to implement the requirement of 20 minutes per day for students from Grades 1-8. The redrafted policy will be brought back to the CODE-COMOH committee for response. Committee members acknowledged that this was great news from elementary students but questioned what was being done for secondary students. Jennifer spoke about the Physical Activity in Secondary School Pilot/Grant that will likely lead to a positive report from pilot schools/grants. The challenge will be ensuring sustainability beyond creative and committed teachers and principals.

The School Food and Beverage policy is currently under review and while the initial policy has had a positive impact on providing in school healthy food options, it has also resulted in unintended consequences with students leaving the school property for alternative (less healthy) options. Principals also report a drop in cafeteria revenues.

Legalization of marijuana – EDU is working with the Federal Government, the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care and provincial/territorial partners with a focus on regulatory requirements and a multi-ministerial public education focus. Committee members identified that Public Health has presented a brief to the Federal Government. Public Health colleagues are participating with the Healthy School Working Table. Members saw an alignment with the Nutrition Standards and the revise Food and Beverage Policy.

1. Ian Gemmill was satisfied that his item regarding the promotion of physical activity in high school was covered in the EDU update
2. Lunch
3. Rosana Salvaterra shared a concern that, with the consolidation of schools, children are experiencing longer bus commutes. Directors commented that different boards have different policies with different allowable lengths for a ride based on localized conditions (eg. distance between schools and the prevalence rural/urban communities). Concerns centred on children’s exposure to diesel emissions and lengthy periods of being sedentary. COMOH members identified a 2010 report prepared by the Ontario Public Health Association regarding reducing the exposure of students to diesel emissions. Members questioned whether the issue of air quality has been addressed since the 2010 report. Committee members requested that this item come back to the next meeting with an invitation to participate sent to EDU Transportation staff.
4. Concussions Update – A multi-partner advisory committee has been established to prepare a report with recommendations regarding the prevention of head injuries in sports. The recommendations will be directed to a number of sectors. Medical Officers of Health are looking for a standard concussion form for the province.
5. University of Ottawa Research Project – The interview phase has been completed including 32 PHU’s and 6 directors of education and the first draft of the report has been sent out to respondents for validation. The researcher wants to share the report with CODE-COMOH that will likely occur in 2017.
6. CODE-COMOH Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) – The development of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was included in the original mandate for the committee. In its first year of operation, the committee came up with a statement of principles. Feedback included that formalizing the relationship may not be helpful if there were an already sound working relationship between school boards and public health units. Val presented the Peel MOU for committee consideration. With a few minor edits and an agreement that utilizing the MOU was optional, the committee endorsed moving ahead to finalize the MOU, drafting of a covering memo and ensuring that both resources were available in French. Ken to work with Eileen de Villa and bring back in 2017.
7. OPHEA is ready to send out revised curriculum and will provide open access to all 36 PHU’s.
8. Dental Health Promotion – Discussion centred around the elements of dental promotion including sipping water, a brushing program, immunization, healthy lunches and dental screening (at JK). Difficult to get community support in many areas regarding the adjustment to the level of fluoride in municipal drinking water. Healthy Smiles Ontario is a program for youth to the age of 17. The committee requested that this item return in the spring of 2017 for further discussion.
9. Legalization of Marijuana – This item was covered in the EDU Update.
10. Future Agenda Items – EDU Transportation Update, Dental Health Promotion, University of Ottawa Research Project
11. Next Meetings: Tuesday January 24, 2017 and Friday May 12 from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm in Toronto.