

November, 2014

## Strengthening Partnerships between Public Health Units and District School Boards

Dear Directors of Education and Medical Officers of Health:

As you know, student well-being is part of the broader context of child and youth well-being. The Ministry of Education's *Achieving Excellence: Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario* made the promotion of child and student well-being one of four interconnected goals for the province's education system.

It is an important mandate in which school boards and boards of health have a shared responsibility. Strong partnerships that focus efforts on strategic priorities can improve health outcomes for children and students, positively affect their achievement, and reduce preventable illness and injuries. This, in turn, will contribute to healthier and better-educated citizens.

Using a comprehensive health promotion approach, Ontario boards of health are required to work with school boards and staff of publicly funded elementary and secondary schools to create or enhance programs and environments, and influence the development and implementation of healthy policies.

### The CODE/COMOH Committee

In light of these shared mandates and common goals, the Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE) and the Council of Medical Officers of Health (COMOH) formed a provincial partnership committee. The mandate of the CODE/COMOH committee is to:

- contribute to the well-being of Ontario's children and students in order to achieve optimal delivery of services and ongoing supports for children and students; and
  - use its leadership capacity and networks to help foster, both formally and informally, strong, collaborative and sustainable partnerships between school boards and boards of health, including partnerships between directors of education and medical officers of health and their respective staff.
-

Since its first meeting in the autumn of 2013, the CODE/COMOH committee has developed terms of reference, held three meetings featuring presentations on key Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care projects and priorities (e.g., student mental health; the role of public health school health managers). The committee has also discussed and collaborated on a number of areas of mutual interest including immunizations (Panorama), concussion policy, partnership agreements between boards of health and school boards, and practices and strategies to more effectively promote child and student well-being.

At the October 29, 2014 meeting, members of the committee unanimously recommended continuation of the CODE/COMOH committee and approved the following recommendation:

*The Council of Ontario Directors of Education/Council of Ontario Medical Officers of Health (CODE/COMOH) Committee recommends that by September 2015, all school boards and boards of health establish and maintain a written partnership agreement to support a mutually-beneficial working relationship between the local school board(s) and public health units.*

Members of the committee will be sharing this recommendation with their respective professional groups. The committee's intent is to have a more detailed outline of the possible components of a partnership agreement available to both Directors of Education and Medical Officers of Health by spring of 2015. Based on examples of agreements already in place across the province, the committee has identified elements (see below) that they believe lead to effective and sustainable partnership agreements.

### Essential Elements of Effective Partnerships

A written partnership agreement between a school board and a board of health may be developed in a variety of ways – and with varying amounts of detail – depending on the needs of both parties and their local communities. The agreement should include:

- **Commitment/Declaration** or overarching statement that outlines the board of health's and school board's commitment to work together, for not only legislated requirements but on health promotion initiatives. (Suggested addition from MOHLTC).
  - **Planning Process** to support both boards of health and school boards in providing input into: their respective multi-year planning; identification of areas of mutual interest; and emerging trends and responsibilities.
  - **Roles and Responsibilities** of school board and health unit staff (e.g., delivery of services, access to students and staff).
  - **Communication Process/Protocol** which could include the structure and timing of joint meetings and the distribution of material and joint communication to staff, students, parents and interested community members/groups.
  - **Research/Data Collection and Sharing** process and a joint understanding of the parameters/restrictions related to the collection of information.
  - **Acknowledgment** of key school board and board of health protocols/procedures.
  - **Processes** to resolve issues of concern, and to review and renew the agreement.
-

We also encourage you to speak with any of your colleagues on the committee at your convenience:

## Committee Members

### Medical Officers of Health

---

**Janet DeMille**

Associate Medical Officer of Health  
Thunder Bay and District  
janet.demille@tbdhu.com

**Penny Sutcliffe**

Medical Officer of Health  
Sudbury and District  
sutcliffep@sdhu.com

**Valerie Jaeger, Co-Chair**

Medical Officer of Health  
Niagara  
Valerie.jaeger@niagararegion.ca

**Hazel Lynn**

Medical Officer of Health  
Grey Bruce  
hlynn@publichealthgreybruce.on.ca

**David McKeown**

Medical Officer of Health  
Toronto  
dmckeown@toronto.ca

**Ian Gemmill**

Medical Officer of Health  
Kingston Frontenac  
Lennox Addington  
dr.i.m.gemmill@kflapublichealth.ca

**Lynn Noseworthy**

Medical Officer of Health  
Kawartha  
lnoseworthy@hkpr.on.ca

### Directors of Education

---

**Jim Costello**

Director of Education  
Lambton Kent DSB  
Jim.Costello@lkdsb.net

**Phyllis Eikre**

Director of Education  
Kenora Catholic DSB  
peikre@kcdsb.on.ca

**Larry Hope**

Director of Education  
Trillium Lakelands DSB  
larry.hope@tldsbc.on.ca

**Donna Quan**

Director of Education  
Toronto DSB  
donna.quan@tdsb.on.ca

**John Crocco, Co-Chair**

Director of Education  
Niagara Catholic DSB  
john.crocco@ncdsb.com

**Joseph Picard**

Director of Education  
CSC Providence  
picajose@cscprovidence.ca

**Gyslaine Hunter-Perrault**

Director of Education  
CS Viamonde  
hunterperreaultg@CSViamonde.ca

Thank you for your ongoing efforts to build stronger partnerships between boards of health and school boards and to support student well being in Ontario schools.

**Valerie Jaeger**

Co Chair  
COMOH

**John Crocco**

Co Chair  
CODE

---