

MEMORANDUM

TO: York Region Accessibility Advisory Committee

FROM: Tiffany Beeston, Public Health Nurse
Infectious Disease Control Division

DATE: June 2, 2006

RE: Influenza Immunization Program

The following gives you a brief outline and history of York Region's Influenza Program and our accessibility initiatives for the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act* (ODA) to date. Please review the information below in preparation for the presentation June 28th, 2006. Any feedback you can provide our team on this date regarding our current accessibility initiatives and future planning would be greatly appreciated.

The Influenza Immunization Program has operated in York Region since 2000 and was developed in order to protect the people living and working in York Region from the flu by offering community flu shot clinics and promoting influenza immunization to all. During the 2005-2006 flu season, the Influenza Program held 42 community flu shot clinics across the Region and immunized over 22,000 community members.

Our program has always strived to ensure that the flu shot is accessible to all York Region residents. In 2005 the program began working on specific accessibility initiatives in order to comply with the ODA and to ensure those in the community with disabilities also had access to our services and an opportunity to receive their annual flu shot.

Our 2005-2006 ODA plan targeted elderly York Region residents who experienced difficulty leaving their homes to attend community based immunization clinics due to any functional limitations or health concerns they might have. Information and feedback was gathered from elderly residents to assess how the York Region Influenza Program could decrease barriers and increase flu shot accessibility to this group. Surveys were distributed to elderly across York Region through retirement homes, seniors' centres, and seniors' apartment buildings with Alternative Community Livening Programs (ACLP). Subsequently numerous focus groups were held with elderly residents to gather additional information regarding how flu shot accessibility could be further increased. Focus groups were also held with community nursing services across York Region to obtain further information and feedback that would help the Influenza Program endeavour to increase flu shot accessibility to York Region's elderly. Recommendations that were established and implemented during the 2005-2006 influenza season included:

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1. Continue to increase accessibility to current community flu shot clinics. E.g. provide enough chairs at flu shot clinics to assist those who may experience difficulty standing for long periods of time.
2. Increase the number of flu shot clinics held at seniors' centres across York Region.
3. Advertise and promote influenza vaccination at Adult Day Programs to increase flu shot awareness and uptake among York Region Elderly.
4. Implement flu shot clinics within the six seniors' apartment buildings with Alternative Community Living Programs (ACLP).

The 2006-2007 Influenza Program ODA planning commenced early in 2006. Our main objective for this year's ODA planning was to assess access to universally funded influenza vaccine at York Region influenza clinics by developmentally delayed or disabled individuals and those with other disabilities including visual, hearing, and mental health disabilities.

The Influenza Program approached York Regional group homes and other programs that deal with developmentally delayed individuals, and those with other disabilities including visual, hearing, and mental health disabilities to explore various ways to increase access to York Region's community based immunization clinics. We have contacted Community Living Associations across the Region, the York Region Canadian Hearing Association, the Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB), and the Canadian Mental Health Association. Feedback was requested from all of these organizations to gather information regarding the barriers to flu shot access experienced by their clients. These associations were also asked to provide their suggestions regarding how these barriers could be eliminated or reduced for their clients. Recommendations that have been established so far in planning for the 2006-2007 flu season include:

1. Promote York Region community flu shot clinics to organizations and associations that provide care to individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities by sending them York Region flu shot promotional materials. Ensure these organizations are aware that there will be no wait time for their clients when attending York Region flu shot clinics.
2. Advertise the Ministry of Health website www.health.gov.on.ca as a place where information regarding flu shot immunization can be found in American Sign Language (ASL).
3. Consider feasibility of having ASL interpreters available at a select number of York Region flu shot clinics.
4. Ensure all flu shot immunizers in York Region are aware of effective communication techniques to assist them in dealing with those who are hearing impaired.
5. Send York Region's flu shot promotional materials to the CNIB (larger print to be used).
6. Ensure flu shot clinic venues are fully accessible and are located on fully accessible bus routes.
7. Consider advertising York Region's Flu shot clinics through VoicePrint Canada (VPC) to ensure that flu shot clinic information is being distributed to those with visual disabilities or impairments.
8. Send York Region flu shot promotional materials to the Canadian Mental Health Association for distribution to all offices across York Region.

Current ODA initiatives as well as future recommendations will be offered in more detail at the presentation scheduled on June 28th at 4pm. We look forward to updating you regarding these initiatives and obtaining any feedback or suggestions that you may have regarding our ODA planning.

Kind Regards,

Tiffany Beeston R.N., B.Sc.N.

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