
TO: Chair and members of the Board of Health

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Recommendations

It is recommended that the Board of Health:

1. **Receive this report for information.**

Key Points

- In the 2018 Ontario Public Health Standards (OPHS) the goal and objective of the “Transparency Framework: Disclosure and Reporting Requirements”¹ can be summarized as,

The Board of Health will promote awareness, understanding, and confidence in Ontario’s public health system while ensuring the public knows how Boards of Health are responding to local community needs.
- In 2017, the Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health (WDGPH) Communications Team specifically developed goals and objectives in light of the pending new OPHS so that Agency communications initiatives would be prepared to meet the requirements of the 2018 OPHS.
- This report highlights WDGPH key communications activities in 2017 including: supporting programs, website management, traditional media outreach, social media activities and developing a client service policy.

Discussion

The Communications Report 2017 is an annual review of WDGPH's communication activities using industry-accepted standards for measuring the reach of various communication platforms. The daily work of the Communications team is informed by the 2017 Organizational Communications Plan, which lays out the overall goals and objectives of the department. In 2017, Communications specifically developed goals and objectives in light of the pending new OPHS so that Agency communications initiatives would be prepared to satisfy the new requirements outlined in the 2018 OPHS¹.

To summarize Figure 7 from "The Transparency Framework: Disclosure and Reporting Requirements" on page 74 of the 2018 OPHS:

The Board of Health will promote awareness, understanding, and confidence in Ontario's public health system while ensuring the public knows how Boards of Health are responding to local community needs.

To ensure this happens in the most efficient and effective way possible, the Communications Team works to ensure all public messaging coming from WDGPH is consistent with the Agency's brand and integrated with other programs.

Because of the many platforms used to ensure multiple messages reach a variety of audiences the Communications Team ensures all communications projects are coordinated across the Agency.

This report highlights 2017 WDGPH key activities from the Communications Team including: supporting programs, website management, traditional media outreach, social media activity and developing a client service policy.

Program-based Campaigns

Communications is a support service that allows other teams to be successful and fulfill their mandate under the OPHS. This is done by:

- Tailoring communications messages and channels to local needs;
- Continually assessing new technologies to better reach audiences; and
- Evaluating communication strategy results to maximize staff time and resources.

The Communications Team works with various program areas to develop communication plans that are customized to support a program goal or campaign. These individualized plans identify audience, key messages, how success will be measured and what are the risks and mitigations.

Examples of how the Communications Team supported programs to reach their target audiences in 2017 include:

Alcohol Stories (#LastCall)

In line with the 2018 OPHS, this campaign was designed to increase the knowledge and capacity of the public and community partners in order to address factors associated with reducing harms related to substance use. The campaign is a partnership between the Guelph

Wellington Drug Strategy and WDGPH. Communications helped create, edit and share 10 videos in which community members were interviewed about the impact of alcohol in their lives and jobs. By using the Agency's Facebook account as the main communications platform, the campaign achieved over 100,000 online impressions (views) by the end of January 2018. Key messaging and a web page were also part of the deliverables. The campaign will continue to focus on resourcing community partners in 2018 to continue raising awareness around harm reduction and healthy behaviours.

Rabies awareness

The raccoon strain of the rabies virus has re-emerged in Ontario. Raccoons, foxes and skunks in Ontario have tested positive for rabies. The majority of confirmed cases have been in the Hamilton area. Other areas with confirmed cases of rabies include the Region of Waterloo and Halton Region.

The Communications Team developed a community-wide awareness campaign encouraging pet owners to vaccinate their dogs and cats for rabies. The campaign included social media content as well as material for pet stores, veterinarian offices, physicians and the public in general. Once symptoms appear, rabies is fatal so protecting pets and the people who care for them is an important Public Health initiative.

Neighbourhood Design Survey

Using data to influence and inform the development of local public policy that promotes healthy built and natural environments is a requirement of the 2018 OPHS. Communications promoted via social media an online survey for residents to share their preferences on community design. This data supports the Built Environment program as they engage municipalities on community planning in order to build healthier communities.

Immunization of Student Pupils Act (ISPA)

Implementing the ISPA creates several reputational risks for Public Health because of the large number of schools, students and parents impacted by possible suspension if the student's immunization record is not up to date with WDGPH. The Communications Team worked collaboratively with the Manager of Vaccine Preventable Diseases to review and redesign all material for schools, parents, physicians and community partners to improve clarity and consistency of messaging.

Let's Talk Parenting social media

Communications supported this initiative by training staff on the Family Health team to launch a Facebook page and Twitter account promoting parenting information from WDGPH. This is the first social media initiative outside of the general Agency Facebook and Twitter accounts. Let's Talk Parenting had a very successful launch and busy 2017. A total of 1535 tweets and 834 Facebook posts were sent out garnering 402,000 impressions (potential views) and 5,400 engagements (likes, retweets, reposts) including 189 incoming messages from followers.

Promoting all Public Health activities

In support of all programs and to build confidence and trust with the public regarding the Public Health brand, Communications also:

- Led communications efforts to inform the public about an infection control breach at a dental office and the need for testing;
- Launched “I am the Public in Public Health” campaign to increase awareness of the difference Public Health makes in the lives of clients and the communities where they live;
- Created the 2016 Community Report to highlight WDGPH's accomplishments, partnerships and milestones for the previous year;
- Launched a client service strategy along with policies and procedures including a process to encourage and document client feedback; and
- Provided an updated Style Guide for staff reference that includes grammar and spelling styles for the Agency so all communication to the public is consistent with the Public Health brand.

Websites

A corporate website is the key way WDGPH can present its messages, programs, health information and key messages to the broadest audience. All campaigns, health promotion activities or crisis communication events use the website as the key communication platform.

WDGPublicHealth.ca

The new WDGPublicHealth.ca website was launched on March 2, 2017. A key reason for launching a new website is to ensure WDGPH is compliant with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)* so that WDGPH information is available to all residents.

The goal of the new website is to connect people with WDGPH services. To help achieve this goal, the most commonly viewed pages were positioned as close to the homepage as possible so visitors can reach them in the fewest possible ‘clicks’.

Normally, overall visits to the website are an important metric. However, due to problems with Google Analytics, statistics were not kept for the following periods:

- January 1-March 2, 2017
- April 21-May 22, 2017

Visits will be monitored for 2018 in order to make annual comparisons. Looking at individual page views also provides a metric regarding how much the website is being visited and for what reason.

Table 1: Most-viewed web pages on the WDGPublicHealth.ca website in 2017*

Page	Visits
Locations	13,651
Tickets, Orders & Closures	11,317
News item: Guelph Dental Associates (Growing Smiles) advised to get tested for hepatitis and HIV	11,129
Careers	11,122
Your Health (top topics within include: STI Testing, Adult Vaccination, Travel Health, Birth Control)	5,842
Clinics & Classes	5,779
Food Safety Training & Certification	5,752
Your Kids (top topics within include: Vaccination, Pregnancy, Parenting, Feeding Your Baby)	4,226
Vaccination, Travel Health & Sexual Health Clinics	4,062
For Healthcare Providers	3,568

*Not including the homepage

Check Before You Choose.ca

CheckBeforeYouChoose.ca is the website where the public can access inspection reports for food vendors, tobacco vendors and personal service settings. This website is turning into a very popular destination and is monitored by many media outlets. It was visited 16,735 times in 2017, receiving 237,884 page views. This is a significant increase from 2016, when the site had 10,903 visits and 134,305 page views. Most visitors access the site from Guelph (48 percent of sessions). In 2018, CheckBeforeYouChoose.ca will be relaunched with new mapping features and the listing of all inspection reports including pools and summer camps in accordance with the 2018 OPHS.

Traditional Media

Positive media relations help ensure members of the media are able to get the information they are looking for while welcoming information from WDGPH on a routine basis. Good media relations can translate into extensive media coverage during a public health crisis. Therefore, a key activity for the Communications Team is to proactively develop and maintain relationships with local media outlets in Wellington, Dufferin and Guelph, as well as provincial and national media outlets when the opportunity arises.

A key strategy is to position the Medical Officer of Health as the primary spokesperson for WDGPH with directors, managers and staff who are recognized experts in their field as spokespeople, when appropriate.

Media coverage of WDGPH by traditional media outlets remained strong in 2017.

WDGPH put out 18 media releases in 2017, similar to previous years. Media outlets also pick up stories through our social media feeds.

In 2017, traditional media coverage included:

- 146 stories about Public Health;
- 29 additional mentions in stories not specific to Public Health;
- 6.5 million impressions through print (potential readers);
- Almost 2 million impressions through website views of media outlet sites (number of people viewing each website);
- 70 quotes from media releases; and
- Dr. Mercer engaged in 11 media interviews and was personally quoted 20 times (as opposed to a quote resulting from a statement made by the MOH in a media release).

Topics covered with the highest frequency by media outlets include:

- Immunization/ISPA: 33 stories;
- Rabies: 23;
- Infection control and complaints: 17 (10 about dental clinics; 7 about laboratories; 1 about a lawsuit in connection with an infection control complaint);
- Mumps: 7;
- Flu: 5; and
- Opioids: 2.

Ensuring solid relationships in the media not only allows for a strong media presence during important public health events, but also satisfy the requirements listed under in 'Research, Knowledge Exchange, and Communication' under the Foundational Standard from the 2018 OPHS.

Social Media

The goal of the Agency's social media channels is to engage the public and earn trust and credibility. Social media is about having direct dialogue with members of the community not only around issues pertinent to WDGPH, but also regarding matters of concern to community members. Social media allows WDGPH to both communicate and listen to large segments of WDGPH's constituency in a timely and cost-effective manner. Social media is vital to WDGPH having engaged audiences so that during a crisis, messages get to the right individuals or groups (general public, media) quickly and effectively.

In 2017, the Communications Team maintained an upward trajectory on social media, building the Agency's Twitter following by 11.4 percent to 3,448 followers; more than doubling WDGPH's Facebook following from 233 to 546; and increasing the blog following by 20 percent (from 500 to 600 subscribers).

Engagement is an important metric in social media. It refers to a user interacting with WDGPH's content. On Twitter, engagements include replies, retweets and likes. On Facebook, likes, shares and comments are each recorded as an engagement.

For example, WDGPH’s March, 2017 Tweet about not sharing your green beer on St. Patrick’s Day (because there was an outbreak of mumps) reached over 16,000 followers, yielded 24 responses and garnered 24 retweets. Since traditional media outlets follow Public Health on social media, this tweet also led to calls and subsequent media coverage in CBC Kitchener Waterloo, *Guelph Today*, and on the CJOY 1460, Magic 106 and 570 News websites.

Table 2: 2017 Social Media Platform Activity

Channel	Fans/Followers	Posts/Msgs Sent	Post Impressions	Engagements
Facebook	546	582	394,080	8,296
Twitter	3,448	783	419,457	3,950
LinkedIn	581	17	12,131	210

To increase the number of views on specific Facebook posts and to reach potential new followers with WDGPH content, the Communications Team experimented heavily with “boosted posts” in 2017.

“Boosting” a post effectively turns a post into an advertisement for WDGPH and is shown to viewers in a geo-targeted area who don’t follow WDGPH on Facebook.

In 2017, twelve campaigns, including three events and two videos were boosted for just over \$1,000. WDGPH posts were shown nearly 109,000 times to 41,645 individuals locally. In comparison, buying a single quarter page print add in a local paper that will run for one edition costs around \$1200. .

YouTube

YouTube is the most widely used social media platform for sharing videos on the Internet. Videos are a very popular medium for online messaging to key demographic groups, and therefore Communications has built an active YouTube channel for WDGPH. The WDGPH YouTube channel housed 53 videos in 2017, which garnered a collective 7,484 views. Continuing to provide the information in the most desirable method for the audience will continue to keep the Communications Department relevant moving forward and satisfy the 2018 OPHS requirements for knowledge exchange within the WDG communities.

Stay Well Blog

Blogging enables WDGPH to share content with the community on topics that are timely. The blog is distributed directly to readers via email. Subscribers must “opt-in” to receive email communications from WDGPH, so while overall distribution size is smaller than other channels (e.g., Twitter), subscribers can be regarded as more engaged and more receptive to WDGPH messages. The 600 subscribers can also share the blog by forwarding them to friends or sharing as a link on social media.

In 2017, the average Open Rate for the corporate blog was 26.3 percent; significantly higher than the non-profit industry average of 19.5 percent.

The most-read blog of 2017 was “Public Health’s role inspecting dental clinics” (1,507 views). Other popular blogs were:

- What happens when you can't afford dental care (873 views);
- Breastfeed in public? Yes you can! (499 views);
- Test your home for radon gas...you may save a life (360 views); and
- I am the Public in Public Health...Jennifer's Story (341 views).

Social media continues to be an important part of WDGPH's communications and will be an integral part of engaging communities as the Agency moves forward in 2018 meeting the requirements of the OPHS.

Client Relations

On behalf of the Agency, Communications reviewed client service best practices, developed client service standards backed up by policy and procedure documentation and a client feedback process. Developing client service standards is a requirement under 'Good Governance and Management Practices Domain' in the 2018 OPHS.

Hanging in all reception areas are plaques stating our client service standards and comment cards are available to all clients.

Any time a comment card is filled in by a client, it is documented and, if necessary, forwarded to the appropriate manager. Every client who indicates they want to be contacted receives a call from the Communications Manager. For example, in 2017, one client wanted to ensure that the staff who served her were thanked for their excellent care. Another client was concerned with the ISPA process and wanted to register her comments with the Agency.

All clients, whether they are using Clinical Services or the services of another program area, will be able to give feedback online through a feedback survey on the Contact Us section of our website which will be promoted in 2018.

WDGPH received 114 filled in comment cards in 2017. Of these, 8 indicated they were "not satisfied" or "very unsatisfied" and 106 were either "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the service they received.

Some clients chose to provide additional comments.

Negative comments were related to immunizations and school suspensions, the physical setup of the buildings (access from "the cow path" at Chancellors Way, phone number not on the sign) and wait times.

Positive comments commended the staff, the reception area and an overall positive experience:

- "The nurses and front staff were amazing! Very helpful and caring. Thank you for the great experience."
- "The staff is very friendly and thorough. I'm very impressed with the clinic and the care I received."
- "I will recommend to friends."
- "Affordable cost, very friendly staff, short wait time."
- "I feel like I am treated as a friend by most of the ladies here and not judged."

On the whole, WDGPH receives very positive comments from clients. However, receiving the few concerned or negative comments and acting on those is key to developing a client-centred service that will satisfy all individuals who have a touch point with the Agency either at a WDGPH office or in the community.

Conclusion

2017 was an exciting year for the Communications Team. With the launch of a new website and the strategic use of social media profiles additional communication platforms were created to reach more audiences with clear messaging about the work of WDGPH.

In 2018, Communications will continue to expand the reach and reputation of WDGPH among local audiences while building knowledge about how WDGPH programs make a difference in the lives of individuals and the communities where they live, work, study and play.

Ontario Public Health Standard

From the 2018 OPHS, Foundational and Program Standards: Research, Knowledge Exchange, and Communication,” (Requirement 7, page 25):

The board of health shall use a variety of communication modalities, including social media, taking advantage of existing resources where possible, and complementing national/provincial health communications strategies.

WDGPH Strategic Direction(s)

- Health Equity:** We will provide programs and services that integrate health equity principles to reduce or eliminate health differences between population groups.
- Organizational Capacity:** We will improve our capacity to effectively deliver public health programs and services.
- Service Centred Approach:** We are committed to providing excellent service to anyone interacting with WDG Public Health.
- Building Healthy Communities:** We will work with communities to support the health and well-being of everyone.

Health Equity

Communicating to the public in general or to priority populations must ensure that all messaging is accessible, meaningful and relevant to people whatever their social circumstances may be. By providing messaging online and many other formats there are a variety of ways that audiences can be engaged depending on their preference. For critical health messages or crisis communications it is crucial that multiple opportunities to receive messaging are available to everyone in the community.

References

1. Ontario. Ministry of Health and Long Term Care. The Ontario Public Health Standards: requirements for programs, services, and accountability. 2018. Figure 7, Transparency framework: disclosure and reporting requirements; p.74.

Appendices

None.