

Our File/N/Réf.
Your File/V/Réf.

<u>Information Previously Distributed</u> To Be Listed on Community Services Committee Agenda 20 Mar 97

DATE 24 February 1997

TO/DEST. Chair and Members of Regional Council

FROM/EXP. Associate Medical Officer of Health

SUBJECT/OBJET **HEPATITIS B AND STREET OUTREACH**

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to inform the Committee of a one year term position to carry out hepatitis B immunization to street-involved youth in Ottawa-Carleton.

BACKGROUND

In early spring of 1996, the Ministry of Health announced a plan to extend hepatitis B immunization to all high school students in Ontario.

The Child and Adolescent Directorate has been implementing this program since September 1996. Youth who are sexually active and attend the Sexual Health Centres may also receive vaccine free of charge. Injection drug users attending the Region's needle exchange program may obtain the vaccine through that service.

DISCUSSION

It appeared that a segment of the youth population was being overlooked: youth not attending an educational facility or Sexual Health Centres. In other words, youth on the street or who are "unstably housed". It should be noted that this population is not the same as the injection drug using crowd. Research tells us that they do, however, engage in dangerous behaviour such as drug use, alcohol consumption and unprotected sex. We also know that health care does not figure high on their priority list.

This is the first time that an Ontario health unit attempts to deliver a health program specifically to youth not attending school and of no fixed address. The goal of this program is to increase the number of youth immunized against hepatitis B thus reducing the incidence of hepatitis B infection in our community.

The immunization focus of this program makes it relatively easy to deliver. The challenges will be to locate the kids, encourage them to participate in immunization and create incentives to have them return to complete the whole vaccine series. It will provide us with an opportunity to work with several community partners including the Youth Services Bureau of Ottawa Carleton, Planned Parenthood of Ottawa, the Sandy Hill Community Health Centre, YM/YWCA, several drop-in centres, shelters, community resources centres, churches and youth hostels. It is a valuable opportunity to increase the Health Department's front line profile for health protection and health promotion. If this pilot is successful, the model could be adapted and used for the delivery of other health programs throughout the province.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Telephone enquiries to partners who have worked with the target population for statistical information and informal discussions on the feasibility of such a program.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The program is 100% provincially funded at \$60,600.00 for a one year term from January, 1997 through December, 1997. The position will be staffed by one or more part time public health nurses.

*Approved by
Dr. Edward Ellis*

MLM