



Board Report

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Working with the Grey Bruce communities to protect and promote health

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Moving Forward with Health Equity in Grey Bruce

As one of the four foundational standards, health equity is at the forefront of public health practice. Health equity means that everyone in our community has a fair chance to be as healthy as possible and receive quality care no matter where they live, what they have or who they are. Using the *Health Equity Indicators for Ontario Local Public Health Agencies User Guide (2016)*, the Grey Bruce Health Unit completed an internal Health Equity Current State Assessment. As a result, the Grey Bruce Health Unit continues to improve health equity work to ensure all programs and services target priority populations, report on inequities and build healthy public policy in our communities.

Collaborative partnerships is one of our strengths to address health equity in the communities we serve. Local organizations from various sectors work together in a coordinated approach to identify and advance health equity. The Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force established the Moving Forward with Health Equity action group to create equitable opportunities that support health and well-being. An online health equity tool was developed by the action group to build capacity for health equity focused decision-making at all levels of health, social and community service sectors. Training videos support the use of the interactive tool. The tool encourages service providers to consider:

- the diverse needs of the population they are serving,
- the many factors that impact health for individuals, families and communities such as income, housing, food, language and education,
- key questions that can guide conversations about the social determinants of health, and;
- relevant links to local supports and resources.

Organizations can use the tool and training videos for staff orientation, professional development, program planning and individual care planning to support the use of a health equity lens in all the work they do. Health equity is foundational to providing quality care and improving the health of all residents. We are very fortunate in Grey Bruce to have such strong partnerships that support collective action on health equity. The health equity tool and training videos can be found on our website at [Grey Bruce Health Unit Health Equity](http://www.greybrucehealthunit.ca/health-equity).



Start Low and Go Slow: Edibles, Extracts and Topicals

Cannabis edibles, extracts and topicals will become legal in [Canada](#) on October 17, 2019. However it will take time, after that date, before new cannabis products become available for legal purchase. To help mitigate health risks, the message to those over the age of 19 is to delay consumption until age 25 and, if consuming, “Start Low and Go Slow”. An additional key message is to ensure safe storage to reduce potential harm to young children and pets.

With cannabis being used for both recreational and medical purposes, there is a need for greater understanding on the use of oral cannabis to avoid accidental ingestion or overconsumption. Public Health is taking a leadership role in developing, implementing and evaluating a community strategy to inform youth and community members on harm reduction approaches and food safety regulations. Working with community partners, we are attending local events with information to support an informed decision when using edibles, extracts and topicals.

With the support of local school boards and police, we are sharing information with parents to help their child make an informed choice about cannabis. The emphasis is on staying connected in order to have open and ongoing talks focused on safety and well-being. Parents are being encouraged to be a positive example to their children by examining their personal habits and by following the lower risk guidelines for both cannabis and alcohol.

We are also having conversations with community leaders to discuss the food system implications in Grey Bruce. There is a potential loss of farmland and greenhouse food production to cannabis growers. In addition, local businesses are seeing a loss of human resources to cannabis production, creating labour shortages.

The legalization of cannabis has enhanced the dialogue around substance use in the community. Public Health will continue monitoring and surveillance, providing data to support program planning and evaluation.