



What are CHCs and AHACs?

Community Health Centres (CHCs)

Community health centres are non-profit, community-governed organizations that provide primary health care, health promotion and community development services, using multi-disciplinary teams of health providers. These teams often include physicians, nurse practitioners, dietitians, health promoters, counsellors and others who are paid by salary, rather than through a fee-for-service system. Community Health Centres are sponsored and managed by incorporated non-profit community boards made up of members of the community and others who provide health and social services.

Services are designed to meet the specific needs of a defined community. In addition, CHCs provide a variety of health promotion and illness prevention services which focus on addressing and raising awareness of the broader determinants of health such as employment, education, environment, isolation and poverty.

CHCs have been in existence in Canada since the 1920s; today, there are over 300 CHCs across Canada. There are 55 CHCs in Ontario.

In many communities, CHCs provide their programs and services for those people who have difficulties accessing a full range of appropriate primary health-care services. Some examples of priority groups are members of linguistic or cultural groups, individuals who live in remote under serviced communities, individuals with low incomes, individuals who are homeless, and the elderly.

Our approach to community health encompasses the broad factors that determine health such as education, employment, income, social support, environment and housing. Health centres provide accessible primary health care services in northern and rural communities, in communities where many people have a high risk of ill health or to individuals and families with significant access issues, such as their race, ethnicity, or mother tongue. Health centres serve all people within their catchment area and have particular expertise in serving people who have difficulty accessing other health services.

Health centres are an integral part of the provincial health services system. Individual health centres have a significant role in providing essential services in many communities. They are often the main delivery mechanism for core community-based health services offering a continuum of services that promote individual and community ownership over health.

Aboriginal Health Access Centres (AHAC)

Aboriginal health access centres for Aboriginal people were created as part of the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy, an initiative to improve the access to health for Aboriginal people. There are 10 community health access centres for Aboriginal people designated in Ontario serving Aboriginal people both on and off reserves. These organizations meet the criteria noted above. In addition, they also focus on traditional healing approaches, complemented by western medical approaches.

Range of Programs at CHCs and AHACs

Primary Care

- Health Assessment
- Clinical evidenced-based illness prevention and health promotion
- Interventions for acute and episodic illness or injury.
- Primary reproductive care
- Early detection of initial and ongoing treatment of chronic illness
- Care for the majority of illnesses (in conjunction with specialists as needed)
- Education and support for self-care
- Support for care in hospital, home and long-term care facilities
- Arrangements for 24-hour/7-day a week response
- Service co-ordination and referral
- Maintenance of a comprehensive medical record for each client in the centre
- Primary mental health care including psycho-social counseling
- Coordination and access to rehabilitation
- Support for people with a terminal illness

Health Promotion and Community Capacity Building

- Smoking cessation
- Asthma health promotion
- Nutrition workshops
- Diabetes education
- Housing security and homelessness
- Food security
- Access to employment
- Supports to immigrants and refugees
- Parenting support groups
- Farm safety
- Breast feeding support
- Childbirth preparation
- Bike safety
- Seniors drop-in
- Senior recreations
- Stress management
- Anger management
- Self-esteem
- Violence prevention
- Community justice conflict resolution
- Community kitchen, gardens
- ESL preparation
- Multi-lingual programming on a variety of topics
- Youth programs
- Women's support group
- School snack programs

