

2022



PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES ANNUAL PERFORMANCE & FINANCIAL REPORT

Message from the Mayor and Medical Officer of Health:

ANDREA HORWATH MAYOR

On behalf of the Board of Health, I am proud to share the 2022 Annual Performance and Financial Report demonstrating the remarkable progress made in bridging the care gap in our community, addressing the ongoing challenges of COVID-19, and prioritizing the wellness of our staff. Through collaborative efforts with local organizations and healthcare professionals, significant steps have been taken to improve the well-being of Hamiltonians. The overall prosperity of community members remains at the forefront of achieving our vision to be the best place to raise a child and age successfully.

DR. ELIZABETH RICHARDSON MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

Public Health Services remains committed to improving community health and well-being. I am pleased to present the 2022 Public Health Services Annual Performance and Financial Report, highlighting our exceptional accomplishments in this regard. The pandemic has underscored the importance of focusing our efforts where they are most needed, and we have successfully risen to this challenge. Through bridging care gaps, facilitating program recovery, and maintaining effective COVID-19 response efforts, we have made significant strides by leveraging local strengths and fostering partnerships. Collaborations with community leaders and multi-sectoral partners have further fueled our progress, allowing us to tap into the collective power of our neighbourhood and communities. I extend sincere gratitude to our dedicated staff for their unwavering commitment, as well as to our community for their continued support and active engagement. Together, we prioritize the health and well-being of the community in Hamilton and will continue to do so.

Introduction

We are pleased to present this Annual Performance and Financial Report to the Public to highlight the achievements and initiatives of Public Health Services for 2022 in promoting the health and well-being of the community. This report showcases our commitment to reducing health inequities and ensuring access to essential public health services for all residents of Hamilton.

What does Public Health Services do?

Public Health Services offers a wide range of services and supports related to health promotion, health protection, and injury and disease prevention to enhance the health and well-being of the population. Our dedicated team of professionals, including nurses, doctors, public health inspectors, dental staff, nutritionists, social workers, specialist roles and health promoters, collaborates with community partners to address the health needs of the community. Our services encompass immunization, disease screening, education programs, family and child health services, population health assessment, sexual health services, air quality monitoring, school services, dental services, food and water safety, injury prevention, and public health inspections, among others.

Public Health Services Priority Health Issues

In 2022, the Board of Health endorsed three key priorities to address the pressing health needs of the Hamilton community:

- **Ramping Up Programs and Services to Address Backlogs in the Community:** Many Public Health Services staff moved from their home programs for over two years during the COVID-19 pandemic emergency response. This meant less ability to focus on other important public health issues, impacting service delivery in many non-pandemic program areas and resulting in service backlogs in the community. The most impacted areas include child health and development, dental screenings in schools, dental services for seniors, routine public health inspections, student immunizations, substance use support, and mental health and well-being initiatives. In 2022, Public Health Services focused on revitalizing these service areas and bridging care gaps to address these backlogs.

- **Continuing COVID-19 Response:** The COVID-19 pandemic, particularly the Omicron wave in early 2022, posed significant challenges to the community's health and well-being. Public Health Services' main goal was to continue to control the spread of the virus and ensure everyone had access to the COVID-19 vaccine. As the local COVID-19 situation began to stabilize, we adapted our strategies and measures to prioritize the health and safety of the community by shifting from an emergency response to sustained monitoring, prevention, and response.
- **Supporting Staff Wellness:** We deeply value the dedication and efforts of our staff members who have tirelessly worked during the prolonged emergency response. Recognizing the impact of the pandemic on their well-being, we prioritized supporting our staff's wellness. Public Health Services developed a comprehensive wellness strategy to protect and enhance the mental health, well-being, and resilience of our staff. By prioritizing the well-being of the team, we ensured the continuity of high-quality public health services to the community with care and dedication.

By addressing these three priorities in 2022, Public Health Services worked to strengthen the overall health and well-being of Hamilton residents. These priority areas allowed us to remain committed to providing accessible, equitable, and responsive public health services to promote the health of the community – for all Hamiltonians.

Ramping Up Programs and Services to Address Backlogs in the Community

In 2022, we focused on ramping up programs and services that were most impacted by delays experienced during the COVID-19 emergency response. Our priority was to restore essential public health services and address any gaps or backlogs in care.

Programs and Services for Children, Families, and Seniors

We prioritized the health and well-being of Hamilton's children, families, and seniors. These populations require special attention and support to achieve optimal population health outcomes. Supporting children is important for ensuring a strong foundation in life in terms of educational attainment, economic productivity, and lifelong health and well-being. Families play a vital role in community well-being, and supporting their health contributes to a healthier, more resilient Hamilton. Lastly, seniors, especially those with limited resources, often face unique challenges in accessing public health services.

Key achievements completed under this priority include catching up on routine immunizations for students, catching up on dental screenings, supporting the mental health and well-being of school-aged children, expanding initiatives and supports for mental health screening in infants and young children, developing and implementing a health equity strategy that incorporates and builds on lessons learned throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, and sustaining support for transition and recovery initiatives.

Routine Immunizations for Students

In 2022, Public Health Services’ Vaccine Program organized catch-up vaccine clinics across Hamilton to address the backlog of school-aged children who had not received their routine immunizations during the pandemic, including Hepatitis B, Human Papillomavirus, and Meningococcal vaccines. Starting in March 2022, Public Health Services held catch-up clinics for students in grades 7 to 12 at multiple locations, including Lime Ridge Mall (now closed), East End, and Mountain public health clinics. In September 2022, Public Health Services staff returned to schools to restart regular school-based vaccinations for grade 7 students and began catching up with the grade cohorts missed during the pandemic. Grade 8 students were prioritized because they would soon age out of regular school-based vaccine clinics. Additional catch-up clinics will run throughout 2023 to ensure school-aged students receive any missed vaccines and stay up-to-date with their immunizations.

Dental Care and Screenings

Public Health Services’ Dental Program, through the Healthy Smiles Ontario program, ensures that children and youth from low-income households have access to free preventive, routine, and emergency dental services. The COVID-19 pandemic presented its own set of challenges for dental care, temporarily disrupting school screenings and Healthy Smiles Ontario services, which resulted in a backlog of students awaiting screenings and a waitlist for preventive Healthy Smiles Ontario services.

In August 2022, we successfully restarted the Healthy Smiles Ontario dental clinics, and by the end of the year, we efficiently cleared the waitlist of 278 clients. Additionally, routine dental screenings in schools resumed in October 2022. We are committed to providing comprehensive oral health assessments to all students throughout the 2022-2023 school year, especially those who missed screenings during the pandemic. Our goal is to ensure that every student receives the care they need for a healthy smile.

At Public Health Services, we are dedicated to ensuring equitable access to high-quality dental care for low-income seniors in the community as well. To bridge the gap in dental care among seniors, we launched the Seniors Dental Health Bus, as part of the provincial Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program. The Seniors Dental Health Bus increases the Dental Program’s capacity to offer free preventive and restorative dental services for eligible seniors aged 65 and older. Initially operating on a limited schedule, the Seniors Dental Health Bus expanded to four days per week by November to meet the growing demand and ensure seniors receive the care they deserve.

*“Many thanks for your dedication, service, and care working in Hamilton's much-needed Public Health Dental Program. My parents have been so kindly treated over the past year and a half. I always appreciate the professionalism and high level of care that they receive. My parents are very grateful to all!” – **Daughter of Dental Clinic Clients***

School-Based Mental Health Supports

Public Health Services recognizes that mental health is crucial to students' well-being, academic success, and overall development. This resulted in action to improve mental health support in schools. In the 2022-2023 school year, the School Program resumed full operations with the continuation of funding for an additional 23 public health nurses through the Ontario Ministry of Health's School-Focused Nurses Initiative. While the initiative was initially launched during the 2020-2021 school year to assist with COVID-19 management in schools, the funding also enabled our nurses to address broader health needs outlined in the School Health Program Standard and related guidelines and protocols. The funding extension until June 2023 allowed us to scale up mental health promotion support and provide direct services in 103 priority schools in Hamilton, which is double the usual number of schools we serve. Public health nurses worked closely with these schools, collaborating with students, teachers, parents and caregivers, and community partners to create comprehensive plans that support students' mental health and well-being.

To promote good mental health, we organized activities, provided social-emotional support sessions, and worked to create safe and welcoming school environments for all students. We are proud to announce that 63 out of the 103 priority schools were certified as “Healthy Schools” by the national healthy schools certification program. This certification ensures schools have the appropriate tools to promote and enhance the health and well-being of students, school staff, and the broader school community.

“[Healthy Schools Certification] is a testament to the hard work and commitment that each school has shown as well as the collaboration of many partnerships. Most notable is the strong partnership that the HWCDSB [Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board] has with Public Health and the amazing group of public health nurses that work at our schools.” – [HWCDSB](#)

Expanded Healthy Growth and Development Services

The Healthy Growth and Development Program played a crucial role in supporting families during pregnancy, postpartum, and the early years, particularly during the challenging times of the pandemic. Throughout this period, essential services such as Healthy Babies Healthy Children Home Visiting Programs, Health Connections, breastfeeding support, and virtual groups for the Canadian Prenatal Nutrition Program were offered, as well as engagement through social media. In 2022, our Healthy Growth and Development Program fully resumed its operations, ensuring that families continued to receive the support they needed.

The Healthy Growth and Development Program recognizes the unique impact of the pandemic on toddlers and young children, who faced limited opportunities for social interaction and emotional development. To address this, interventions were prioritized that focused on education, early identification of developmental and social-emotional

issues, confidence and skill building, and connecting families to community supports. The aim is to support children aged 0 to 6 years old who are at risk of poor social and emotional development, providing them with the necessary tools for healthy growth.

Another important aspect of our Healthy Growth and Development Program was optimizing health during the perinatal period, which encompasses pregnancy to 12 months after birth. We offered prenatal education, identified individuals at risk for poor mental health during pregnancy and postpartum, provided breastfeeding support, and connected families with community resources. We transitioned from virtual and phone-based interventions to in-person sessions for programs such as the Canadian Prenatal Nutrition Program and parenting education groups, allowing for more direct and personal support. By focusing on this critical period, we aimed to ensure the well-being of both parents and their babies.

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic were addressed through collaboration with community coalitions, planning tables, and key partnerships. This involved identifying the effects of the pandemic, establishing priorities, and expanding screening, assessment, and intervention during pregnancy, infancy, and the early years. We used geospatial mapping to identify neighbourhoods with high needs to ensure that our resources were allocated where most necessary.

Another noteworthy program implemented by Public Health Services, fully funded by the Ministry of Health, is the low-barrier, quick-access mental health clinic established through a sustained partnership with the Good Shepherd Centre and the Hamilton Family Health Team. This collaborative effort has played a crucial role in providing on-site support for families experiencing homelessness, ensuring they receive comprehensive care during challenging times. One significant outcome of this partnership is the introduction of Theraplay group programming for caregivers and their young children.

“Theraplay, a play-based therapy approach, has fostered stronger bonds between caregivers and children during this trying period. The benefits of this partnership are evident, as it contributes to greater social stability and lasting support for those in need.” – Grace Baldwin, Director of the Good Shepherd Family Centre

For more information on Public Health Services’ Healthy Growth and Development Program, please visit this [link](#) for pregnancy and prenatal health and this [link](#) for parenting supports.

Health Equity

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing health and social issues, disproportionately affecting marginalized populations. To address some of these challenges, Public Health Services established the Vaccine Readiness Network in December 2020. The Vaccine Readiness Network consisted of community organizations and representatives in Hamilton, working together to improve COVID-19

vaccine planning, distribution, and access for priority populations.

In June 2022, the Vaccine Readiness Network published a report titled “[Community Impact on Equitable Vaccine Delivery in Hamilton: Stories and Lessons Learned from the Vaccine Readiness Network](#).” This report highlighted the valuable lessons learned from various health, education, social service, and community organizations across Hamilton to strengthen community engagement and equitable vaccine rollout during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Vaccine Readiness Network demonstrated that community outcomes are improved when community and institutional partners work together to plan policies and programs to address health inequities at the local level.

Building upon the lessons learned from the Vaccine Readiness Network, in 2022, Public Health Services’ Health Equity Program developed a comprehensive plan across various program areas to enhance public health capacity for health equity and anti-racism action. The plan, with four components - Competency Development, Data for Health Equity, Community Collaboration and Awareness, and Communication - aims to equip Public Health Services to meet health equity outcomes outlined in the Ontario Public Health Standards.

The plan will be implemented in stages over several years, with a focus on achieving tangible progress. It includes comprehensive training and competency development for Public Health Services staff to deepen their understanding of health equity principles and empower them with effective tools to address health disparities. The plan also involves establishing health equity key performance indicators for each program within Public Health Services, allowing for monitoring progress toward health equity goals by the end of 2024. Data collection on the social determinants of health will be enhanced to inform evidence-based decision-making, and a co-design approach will be employed, working closely with community organizations, to gather insights and shape strategies that effectively address social determinants of health.

Through these collective efforts, Public Health Services aims to foster a healthier and more inclusive community in Hamilton, ensuring that everyone, regardless of their background or circumstances, can thrive.

Sustaining Support for Transition and Recovery Initiatives

In addition to the other programs and services mentioned, Public Health Services took specific actions to prioritize various public health needs in the Hamilton community. Here are some more key initiatives achieved in 2022:

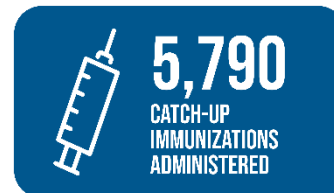
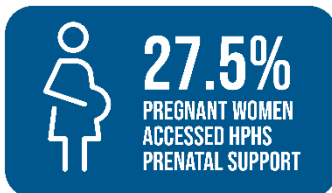
- **Safeguarding Food and Water:** In 2022, our dedicated team conducted thorough inspections of 3,007 food inspections and 198 water sources, including various recreational water facilities, in Hamilton. These inspections allowed us to proactively identify and address potential risks that could lead to foodborne illnesses, compromised water quality, or safety concerns in recreational water areas. Our commitment is to protect the community by enforcing food safety

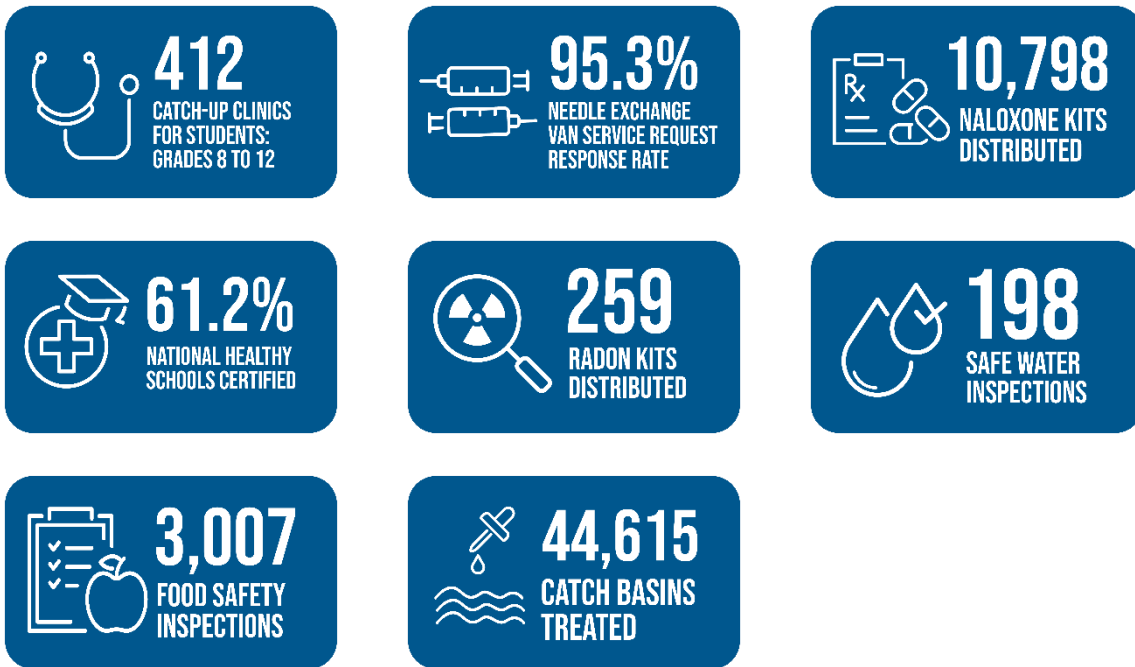
regulations, monitoring water quality, and promoting safe recreational water activities. We strive to create a healthy and enjoyable environment for everyone in Hamilton, where they can have confidence in the safety of their food, water, and recreational experiences.

- **Restoring Essential Programs:** In response to the pandemic's impact, we resumed essential programs at Public Health Services, such as the Chronic Disease Prevention Program and the Tobacco Control Program. These programs play a crucial role in promoting healthier lifestyles, preventing chronic diseases, and reducing the harmful effects of tobacco use, directly benefiting the residents of the community.
- **Addressing Climate Change:** Recognizing the interplay between human health and climate change, our Health Hazards and Vector Borne Disease Program provided leadership to the City of Hamilton’s Climate Change Impact Adaptation Plan, which is now being implemented corporately. This collaborative effort involves multiple stakeholders across the community, working together to address the specific climate change impacts affecting Hamilton and to develop strategies for adaptation and resilience-building.
- **Workforce Development for Local Expertise:** We are committed to nurturing a skilled workforce within the community. Training opportunities for individuals aspiring to become certified public health inspectors continued to be provided. This investment in local expertise ensures that our public health services are delivered by qualified professionals who deeply understand the specific needs and challenges faced by the Hamilton community.

Through these initiatives, Public Health Services demonstrated its firm dedication to protecting and promoting the health and well-being of the community. By focusing on local food and water safety, restoring essential programs, addressing climate change, and investing in our local workforce, we strive to create a healthier and more resilient future for the residents of Hamilton.

Programs and Services Data Highlights for 2022





Continued COVID-19 Response

In 2022, Public Health Services faced significant challenges in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly with the emergence of the Omicron variant end of December 2021. To address the rapid increase in cases, we scaled up our vaccine operations by redeploying over 276 staff members.

In February, efforts were made to increase COVID-19 vaccine coverage in Hamilton. Notably, over 90% of residents aged 12 and above received their first dose, with second dose coverage approaching 90%. School-based and mobile clinics were established to target younger age groups and areas with lower vaccine coverage, resulting in the administration of 3,234 doses at 159 school clinics.

Throughout the year, Public Health Services closely monitored the status of the virus, communicated up-to-date information, and managed cases and outbreaks. We responded to and managed 1,249 outbreaks and completed 537,019 tests to detect and control the spread of the virus. Through our dedicated efforts, we have administered 1,432,325 COVID-19 vaccine doses to protect the community. Additionally, we have been a reliable source of information and assistance, handling over 750,000 phone calls to address public concerns.

Throughout the year, Public Health Services collaborated with community partners to ensure the success of the COVID-19 vaccine rollout. We led the planning and coordination of a booster campaign, working closely with local healthcare partners to provide additional vaccine doses.

To address vaccine hesitancy and build trust, as proposed by the Black Health Leaders Forum and the Vaccine Readiness Network, Public Health Services implemented the Vaccine Ambassador Program. These ambassadors, representing communities disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, played a crucial role in engaging priority populations. They provided information, addressed concerns, and built confidence in COVID-19 vaccination. Working at vaccine clinics, they offered translation services, assisted with appointment booking, and built relationships with community groups and organizations. They played an important part in closing the gap in vaccine uptake gap for first and second doses of COVID-19 vaccination between Hamilton’s most and least racialized neighbourhoods. One example of the valuable contribution of our vaccine ambassadors was shown through this anecdote shared by a vaccine ambassador.

*"I actually had a teenage boy say to me, 'Hey, I'm really sorry I lied about already having my shots. I've seen you guys around and finally decided to get it.' [This story underscores the fact that people lead busy lives and have their own priorities]. Our approach aims to avoid overwhelming them with constant promotion. The consistency of our presence and being easily accessible made a significant difference in building trust and encouraging vaccination." – **Public Health Services Vaccine Ambassador***

As the year progressed, positive trends in the local COVID-19 situation emerged, leading to a stabilization in the spread and severity of COVID-19 transmission. Therefore, public health measures transitioned from being mandatory to recommended, allowing for a gradual easing of restrictions while still maintaining vigilance to protect the community's health and well-being.

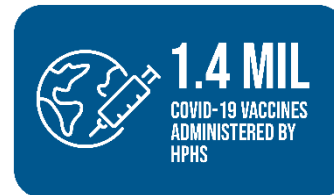
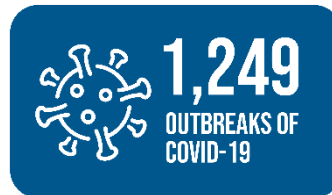
To ensure a coordinated response, COVID-19 functions were successfully integrated into existing programs, such as the Infectious Disease Program and Vaccine Program. The Infectious Disease Program proactively responded to outbreaks and conducted inspections in high-risk settings. Simultaneously, the Vaccine Program collaborated closely with health and social care partners to ensure equitable access to vaccines and reduce barriers that may hinder vaccination efforts. This has led to significant efficiencies and building capacity within Public Health Services to support future pandemic responses.

Throughout these transitions and challenges, Public Health Services remained dedicated to striking a balance between managing the impacts of the pandemic and implementing appropriate measures to safeguard the health and well-being of the community. The collective efforts of our staff, the engagement of community vaccine ambassadors, and collaboration with partners have been instrumental in achieving remarkable progress in COVID-19 vaccination coverage and addressing vaccine hesitancy in Hamilton.

COVID-19 Data Highlights:

Some key data related to COVID-19. Please note that the following data is up until the

end of December 2022:



For a more comprehensive overview of COVID-19 timelines and vaccination numbers, please read our [COVID-19 After-Action Report](#).

Supporting Staff Wellness

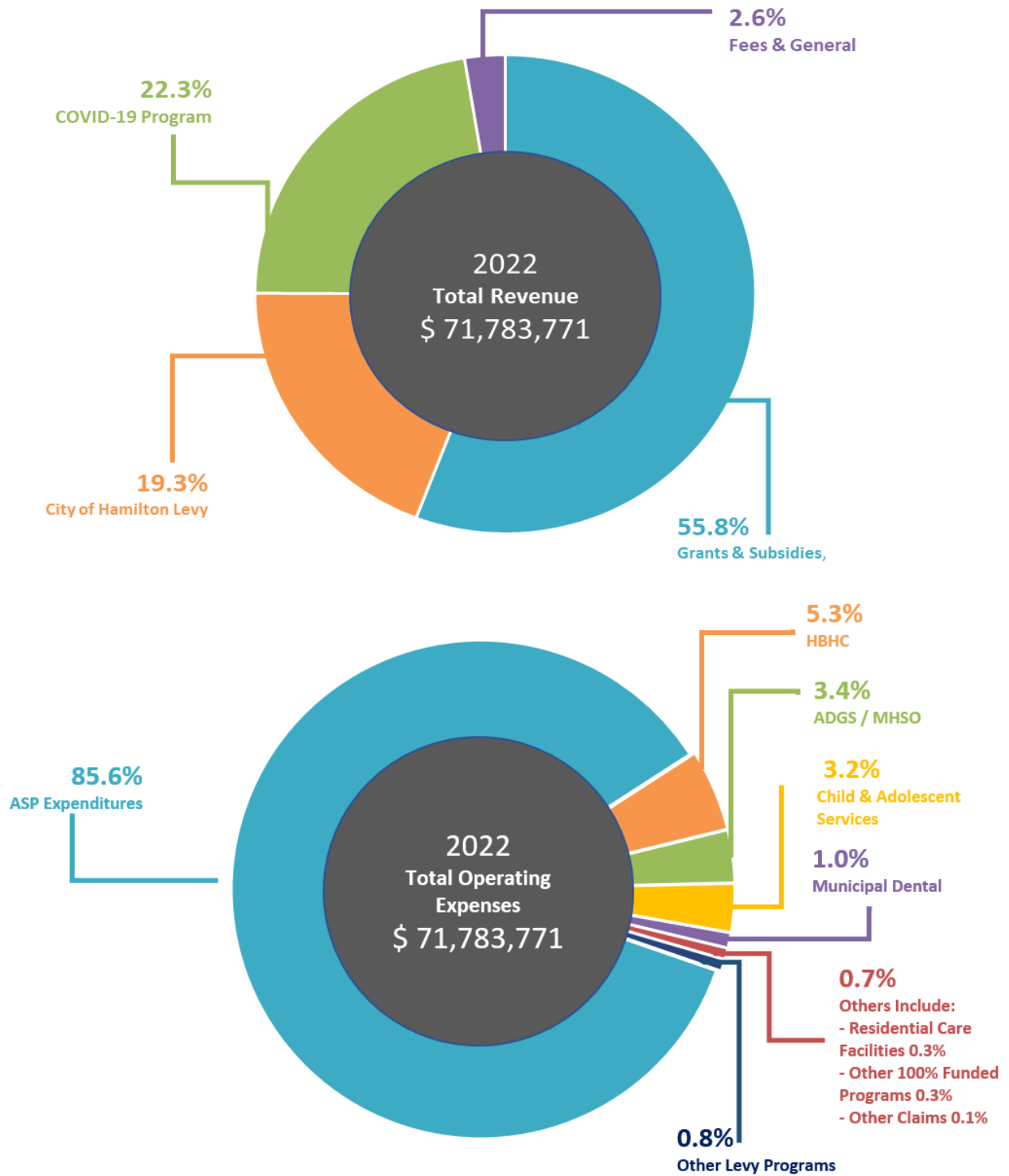
We recognize the significant impact the past few years have had on the mental health and well-being of our Public Health Services staff due to the challenges brought about by the pandemic. As an organization serving the community, we understand that the well-being of our staff directly influences the quality of care and support we can provide to the residents of Hamilton. Public Health Services is committed to cultivating staff well-being as they continue to serve and positively impact the community.

During the months of May to August, Public Health Services focused on redeploying our staff, recruiting new staff, onboarding, and familiarizing them with our programs and services. We placed special emphasis on prioritizing their well-being throughout this process, particularly considering that many team members had been deployed for over two years and required comprehensive reorientation and training as they returned to their pre-COVID-19 roles.

Public Health Services remains committed to a measured and realistic recovery transition, mindful of the health and well-being of our people, and confident in the ability of our entire workforce to rise to emerge better equipped and positioned to continue our vital work in promoting and protecting the health and well-being of those who live, work, and visit the City of Hamilton. To effectively support our staff, we continue to implement a comprehensive strategy to protect and strengthen staff mental health and well-being. We understand that the effects on mental health can persist for an extended period after a major emergency, which is why we continue to work on implementing and refining this strategy. This is especially important as we observed a high, stable trend in staff unplanned absences compared to pre-COVID-19 absenteeism levels.

As part of our commitment to staff wellness, Public Health Services has organized various initiatives across different programs. Investing in the wellness of staff is not only a reflection of our commitment to their personal well-being but also a recognition of their integral role in the betterment of Hamilton. Their resilience and dedication are essential in enabling us to make a lasting positive impact on the lives of those who we serve in the community.

Public Health Services Funding:



*Abbreviations: ASP: Annual Service Plan, ADGS/MHSO: Alcohol, Drugs & Gambling Services/ Mental Health & Street Outreach, HBHC: Healthy Babies Healthy Children