

## Program/Service Information Report

### Children's Health Services

April 1, 2025 – September 30, 2025

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**To:** Board of Health

**Meeting Date:** December 3, 2025

**Report No.:** BH.01.DEC0325.C14

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### Key Points

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- The Children's Health Services (CHS) program supports families from the prenatal stage through birth and the transition to school, contributing to improved early child development, positive family well-being and optimal community health outcomes.
- The Healthy Babies Healthy Children (HBHC) program, delivered through CHS, is fully funded by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS).
- Between April 1 and September 30, 2025, over 900 HBHC screens were completed to identify families eligible for the program.
- Strong community partnerships continue to enhance the program's reach and impact through coordinated promotion and multi-faceted service delivery that meets the diverse needs of families.

### Program Requirements

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#### Compliance with OPHS and Accountability Indicators:

☒ In compliance

☐ Not in compliance. If not in compliance, provide additional information about the variance and how it will be addressed.

### Highlights

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#### Healthy Babies Healthy Children (HBHC) Program Update

The HBHC program, mandated by the Ontario Public Health Standards (OPHS) and funded by MCCSS, offers voluntary home visits to families from pregnancy through school entry. These visits are designed to promote children's health and reduce disparities in our community.

Hospitals are the primary referral source, accounting for 86% of total referrals, with additional referrals from healthcare providers and community partners.

As shown in Table 1, screening numbers for early childhood have increased in recent years. This positive trend reflects stronger partnerships with community service providers and the expansion of phone assessments by the Client and Community Support team, enabling more families to be reached and supported.

**Table 1:** HBHC Universal Screening Data (Funding Year April 1-March 31)

Funding Years	# of Prenatal Screens	# of Postpartum Screens	# of Early Childhood Screens
April 1-Sept 30, 2025	17	907	67
2024-2025	38	2009	72
2023-2024	46	1987	64
2022-2023	15	2131	61

Postpartum screening coverage has declined over the past two years, dropping from 83% in 2023-24 and 80% in 2022-23 to 63% in 2024-25 and 61% between April and September 2025 (see Table 2). This decline has occurred alongside an increase in the birth rate, which means more families are welcoming new babies, but fewer are being reached through postpartum screening. This decline highlights the need for the CHS team to strengthen support for hospital partners, family doctors and midwives caring for these families. Maintaining strong screening coverage is essential for identifying families who may benefit from early intervention through the HBHC program.

**Table 2:** Postpartum Screening Data in WDG (Funding Year April 1-March 31)

Funding Years	# of Postpartum Screens	# of Live Births	Postpartum Screening Rate (as % of Live Births)
April 1-Sept 30, 2025	907	1476	61%
2024-2025	2009	3185	63%
2023-2024	1987	2396	83%
2022-2023	2131	2678	80%

The CHS team is responding to declining postpartum screening rates by strengthening partnerships with hospitals, family physicians, and midwives. Key actions include enhancing communication, streamlining referral processes, and improving data-sharing to support timely screening and follow-up for families. During discussions with healthcare providers, barriers to the current screening process, such as increased workloads, were identified. Additional feedback from hospital staff indicated that gaps in families' access to prenatal education may contribute to challenges during the transition to the postpartum period, highlighting an opportunity to strengthen supports during pregnancy.

Recognizing the need for improvement, the CHS team has piloted a new referral form at one hospital to streamline processes and align with existing workflow. The team continues to promote the online prenatal program and is expanding in-person prenatal education within the community, with an initial pilot already completed in Dufferin. Together, these initiatives aim to ensure that pregnant and postpartum individuals are consistently reached, supported, and connected to appropriate services.

The number of In-Depth Assessments (IDAs) has increased steadily since 2022-23, reflecting strengthened screening follow-up and expanded program reach (see Table 3). Between April and September 2025, 194 assessments were completed, with 43% of families identified as high risk, which is consistent with trends from the previous two years. These proportions likely reflect broader engagement of families with varying levels of need and improved early identification. Ongoing monitoring remains essential to ensure program capacity and interventions continue to respond effectively to the evolving needs of families in our community.

**Table 3:** Summary of In-Depth Assessments (Funding Year April 1-March 31)

Funding Years	# of In-Depth Assessments	High Risk Families – Count (% of Total Assessed)
April 1-Sept 30, 2025	196	85 (43%)
2024-2025	376	143 (38%)
2023-2024	369	158 (43%)
2022-2023	137	117 (85%)

As per Table 4, participation in the Home Visiting Program (HVP) has remained consistently strong and stable over the past four years. Nearly all families engaged through the HBHC program continue to participate in home visiting services each year. Similarly, most visits completed are part of the HVP (typically 97-99%), demonstrating ongoing fidelity to the home visiting model and sustained engagement of families once enrolled.

The number of families served, and visits completed each year has remained relatively steady. The current year's mid-point data (April–September 2025) suggest activity levels are on track to mirror previous years. This stability indicates a well-established and reliable program, maintaining strong community reach and consistent service delivery to families over time.

**Table 4:** WDGPH HBHC Home Visiting Data (Funding Year April 1-March 31)

Funding Years	# of Families / # of Families Part of HVP	# of Visits / # of Visits Part of HVP
April 1-Sept 30, 2025	291/283	1115/1039
2024-2025	440/436	1951/1908
2023-2024	424/422	2093/2032
2022-2023	169/177	2309/2087

## Future Directions

The Children's Health Services (CHS) team is committed to advancing healthy child development by focusing on evidence-informed practice, early intervention, and strong collaboration with partners. Strategic priorities for the upcoming period are designed to deliver measurable improvements for families and the broader community.

Strategic priorities for the upcoming period include:

- **Expand prenatal referrals** to facilitate earlier engagement and support positive birth and parenting outcomes. The team will collaborate with family health teams, midwives, and other healthcare providers to strengthen connections with pregnant individuals who would benefit from additional support. CHS will also expand in-person prenatal education to increase awareness of available services and improve readiness for birth and the postpartum period.
- **Enhance collaboration with hospital partners** to increase postpartum screening rates and streamline connections to community services. The CHS team will continue regular meetings with hospital partners to discuss barriers, share information, and identify opportunities to better support postpartum parents.
- **Strengthen family and community awareness** of available supports through targeted outreach and coordinated service pathways in partnership with service providers. Staff will continue participating in community events hosted by partners to promote public health services and connect directly with families.
- **Public Health Leadership at Collaborative Early Years Planning Tables:**  
Engage proactively in local and regional early years planning tables to promote early identification, coordinated support, and improved access to services for families.

The program remains committed to ensuring that families receive timely, equitable access to evidence-based information and tools that foster resilience, optimize developmental outcomes, and support children's success into adulthood. Progress on these strategic priorities will be measured and reported regularly, providing the data and insights needed for informed decision making, accountability, and continuous improvement.

## Related Reports

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BH.01.JUN0425.R20 - Healthy Babies Healthy Children Program

[\[https://wdgpublichealth.ca/sites/default/files/bh.01.jun0425.r20 - chs.pdf\]](https://wdgpublichealth.ca/sites/default/files/bh.01.jun0425.r20 - chs.pdf)

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