

TITLE: Access to Dental Care for Haliburton Seniors

TO: Board of Health

FROM: Anna Rusak, Health Promoter, Oral Health Team

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APPROVED BY: Dr. Natalie Bocking, Medical Officer of Health & CEO

In Camera? Yes No

Overview

In 2019, the province of Ontario established the Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program (OSDCP). At the time of implementation provincial direction indicated that Public Health Units were to deliver the program or do so in collaboration with Community Health Centres (CHC) and/or Aboriginal Health Access Centres. If Health Units were to partner with external partners, there was a need to draft Service Level Agreements (SLAs) to ensure clear and consistent communication for the delivery of the program, funding and reporting requirements. HKPRDHU was successful in establishing SLAs with Northumberland Community Health Centre, and Community Care City of Kawartha Lakes. Since we did not have a CHC in the north we explored a unique partnership with Volunteer Dental Outreach of Haliburton (VDO). This program has been successfully implemented across the three sites since 2019 and recently the sites have seen changes related to the new federally funded Canadian Dental Care Program (CDPC). The changes are positive in that more clients are enrolling in the CDPC program and sites offering OSDCP are seeing decreased enrollment in the program. Thus, VDO has communicated its intent to cease delivery of the Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program effective January 2025.

Recommendations to Board of Health

THAT the Board of Health receives for information this briefing note and documented changes to the delivery of the Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program in the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit region.

Issue

In fall 2024, Volunteer Dental Outreach (VDO) of Haliburton notified HKPR of its termination of the Service Level Agreement for OSDCP and that in January 2025 VDO would no longer be participating in the OSDCP. This decision comes as a result of the new Canadian Dental Care Plan (CDCP). The purpose of this briefing note is to notify the Board of Health of the change in practice and to explain how OSDCP clients in Haliburton will be ensured access to dental care moving forward.

Current Situation - Access to dental care for seniors provincially and locally

Currently in Ontario, eligible seniors aged 65 and older have two government-run dental treatment programs to choose from:

The *Ontario Seniors Dental Care Program (OSDCP)*, which provides free, routine dental services for low-income seniors, who are Ontario residents, with an annual net income of \$25,000 or less for a single senior or a combined annual net income of \$41,500 or less for couples and have no other dental insurance. One exception to this is that seniors who qualify for OSDCP can also choose to apply for and use the Canadian Dental Care Plan.

Seniors with OSDCP cards must seek dental treatment through public health units or partnering Community Health Centres or Aboriginal Health Access Centres. Since the launch of OSDCP in November of 2019, HKPR seniors who qualify for the OSDCP have been able to seek dental treatment through public dental clinics run through HKPR partners at the Community Care City of Kawartha Lakes Community Health Centre in Lindsay, Community Health Centres of Northumberland in Port Hope and the Volunteer Dental Outreach in Haliburton.

The *Canadian Dental Care Plan (CDCP)* is a federal program that is meant to make dental care more affordable for up to nine million uninsured Canadian citizens. To qualify one cannot have access to any other private dental insurance and must have an adjusted family net income of \$90,000 or less. Those households making a family net income of less than \$70,000 would not have to pay a co-payment for covered dental services. Currently, the program is open to seniors 65 years of age and older. Eligibility for this program is meant to expand to all ages in 2025.

Canadians with CDCP cards can seek dental services from participating dental providers by using the online dental provider search tool [CDCP dental provider search tool](#) or by phoning any dental

provider in their community and asking if they accept CDCP clients. Which means that there is greater accessibility to dental services in the HKPR communities.

Volunteer Dental Outreach (VDO) Clinic's Decision and the impact on access to dental care for Haliburton seniors

Recently, the Volunteer Dental Outreach (VDO) clinic in Haliburton has stated that as of January 2025 they will no longer be accepting clients on the OSDCP. This decision was made because of the changing landscape of dental care in Canada, mainly the availability of the CDCP. Seniors, according to the VDO, make up one third of their clientele and most clients that qualify for the VDO qualify for the CDCP. Once on the CDCP, seniors can be seen by participating dental providers for treatment, and the VDO wants to avoid taking away patients from these practices. There are two dental practices in Haliburton Village, less than a five-minute drive from the VDO clinic, who are listed on the CDCP dental provider search tool, as accepting clients on this program.

The VDO stated that they are helping clients sign up for CDCP and has confirmed that legally all clients rostered with them will continue to receive services by VDO and will not be turned away.

References

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/dental-care-seniors>

[Canadian Dental Care Plan - Canada.ca](https://www.canada.ca/en/health-services/minister-of-health/2024/04/canadian-dental-care-plan.html)

<https://thehighlander.ca/2024/10/24/vdo-pivots-as-feds-step-up-dental-care/>