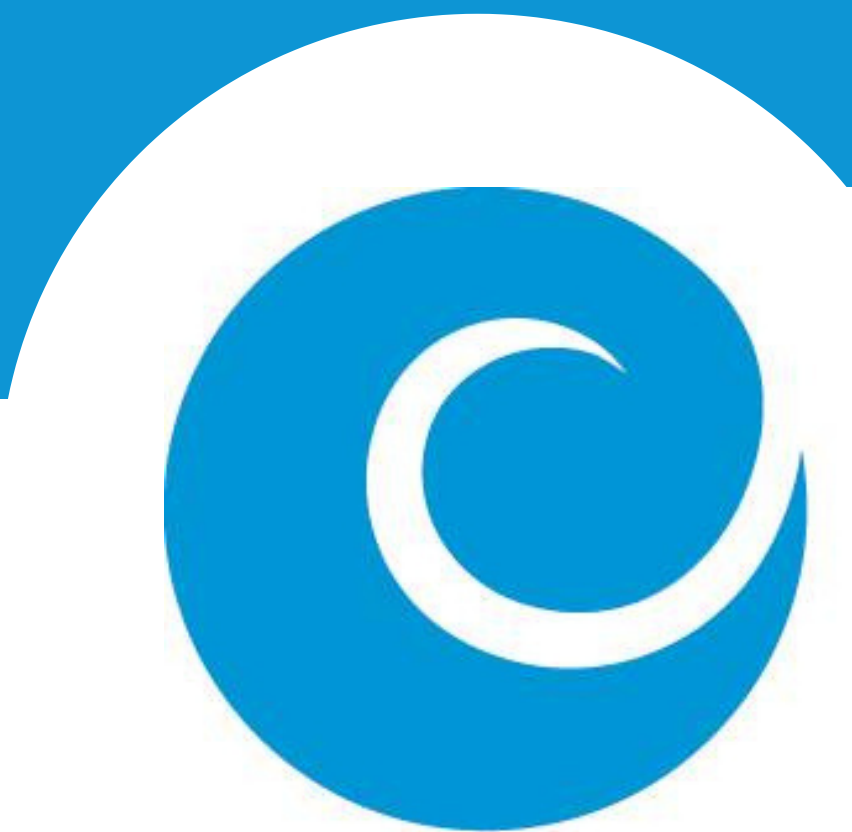
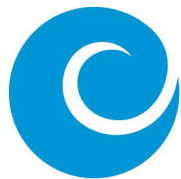


SVCHC - SEPTEMBER 2020

# COVID-19 REPORT

*Navigating Through a Pandemic*





# Seaway Valley Community Health Centre

*Working with you for a Healthier Community*

## Introduction

In January 2020, when the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) developed its first guidance for Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) and Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) for novel coronavirus (COVID-19), there was limited information about how COVID-19 was transmitted and the spectrum of illness associated with virus.

On March 11th, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the novel coronavirus outbreak a global pandemic. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus which has spread throughout the globe. As the epidemiologic data was evolving, and little was known about COVID-19, the MOHLTC applied precautionary principles and recommended all staff working in health care environments to use personal protective equipment (PPE) for patient/client care and for specimen collection and testing, to isolate patients/clients with COVID-19 symptoms and to work from home in order to social distance.

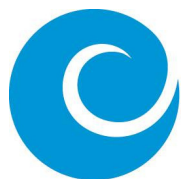
Data modelling was used to inform pandemic planning and demonstrated that proactive actions taken were working to flatten the curve and slow the spread of COVID-19 in Ontario's general population. Although we have had encouraging reports of relatively low spread of COVID-19 in our catchment area up to September, we continue to maintain and adhere to all public health measures.

At this time, there are no specific vaccines or treatments for COVID-19, however, there are many ongoing clinical trials evaluating potential treatments. We are hopeful that a safe vaccine will be available in 2021.

## Seaway Valley Community Health Centre during COVID-19

Seaway Valley Community Health Centre's (SVCHC) role during the pandemic was, and continues to be, maintaining service delivery to our clients, supporting the needs of our staff and our community and helping to prevent and slow the transmission of COVID-19 by ensuring we are well informed. Protecting ourselves and others from this infection has required daily review of surveillance and monitoring documents, directives, guidance documents and reports from the MOHLTC and Public Health.

Several COVID-19 specific policies related to responding to a pandemic (i.e. working from home, virtual service delivery, use of PPE, etc.) were created and/or updated to govern and support our work during this unprecedented time. Leanne Clouthier, Manager Primary Health Care Programs and Services, and Lisa McDonald, Primary Care Supervisor, played vital roles implementing the Centre's Emergency Response policies and protocols, including establishing our internal "Command Centre" on March 13th, 2020.



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The Primary Care Team offered COVID-19 testing on site since March 2020, and continues to do so. Much of our role during the pandemic also involved educating our staff, clients and the general public on infection prevention and control measures, including training on hand hygiene practices, donning and doffing PPE, and an appreciation of social distancing. Regular information updates were posted on our website and on social media to ensure our clients and the public were well informed and linked to resources.

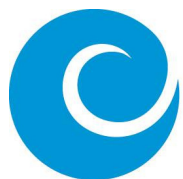
Substantial infection prevention and control measures were instituted in the Centre to allow staff to work safely and allow clients to enter the building, this includes mandatory masking and use of other PPE, plexi-glass installation in offices, and 2-metre markings throughout the Centre to ensure social distancing. Hours of operation were adjusted to allow enough time to properly disinfect areas such as waiting room, exam rooms, equipment and furniture, while ensuring everyone had their lunch break.

All our clients were contacted initially by telephone as a check-in, then scheduled for virtual appointments or in-person encounters at the Centre, as needed. Those clients who require face-to-face appointments continue to be seen at the Centre as our commitment to ER avoidance, quality and person-centered service was maintained throughout. Our primary care providers and nurses played vital roles in maintaining face-to-face contact with our clients. Alternatively, clients are receiving telephone or virtual appointments using OTN, PSS or ZOOM platforms for appointments in primary care, nursing, Lung Health, Cardiac Rehab, Social Work, nutrition, physiotherapy, etc.



Clients who enter the building are greeted by a screener stationed at the front entrance. The screener is provided with adequate PPE to ensure they are safe while screening incoming clients for COVID-19. The screener role has largely been taken by our nursing staff, who have done an exceptional job supporting SVCHC in all areas during these times. The role of screener has also been supported by our Community Health Worker, Social Worker, Cardiac Rehab, OTN and PCO nurses, our Board President/Volunteer, and others.

We would also like to thank Allie Fickes, the primary care summer student who acted as the Screener for 2 months while at SVCHC.



# Seaway Valley Community Health Centre

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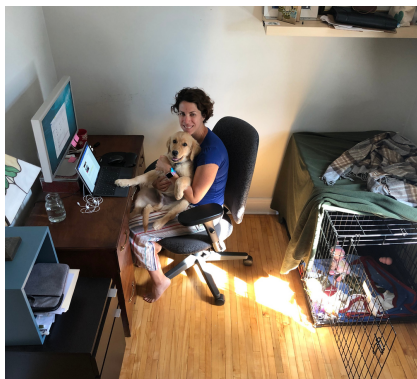
Our physiotherapist has continued to see clients via telephone or virtual visits, indicating that these encounters have been challenging but effective for some in treating and providing support for their pain management. She has also completed two walker assessments in ensuring her clients were able to get new walkers through the ADP program.

## **Working from Home**

A significant amount of training was provided to all staff to inform on the pandemic, to train on various virtual platforms and privacy measures to safeguard our virtual work from home experience. Significant training on infection prevention and control measures were also provided to ensure staff felt safe to work in office and/or to gradually return to work as Public Health directives allowed.

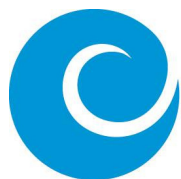
All staff were set up with technology to work from home early on in the pandemic. This was a significant undertaking as equipment was purchased, licenses researched and purchased, privacy and security training provided, policies developed, technical issues managed, and staff adjusted to the new virtual communication method. This would not have been possible without the support from Jeff Walmsley, Manager of Corporate Services, Matt Lavallee, Office & Benefit Administrator, and Leanne Clouthier, Manager Primary Health Care Programs and Services.

Those staff who could conduct their work at home were set up with necessary technology to virtually serve our clients, join meetings and participate in training as required. Daily all staff huddles were held for the first three months, then reduced to three times per week and now continue once a week. Staff have been surveyed four times to date to monitor how effectively they are coping during COVID-19. To the best of our ability, management has adjusted and implemented to support the survey recommendations made by staff.



***Furry friends: our staff are often accompanied by their animals on days when they are working from home.***





# Seaway Valley Community Health Centre

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## Supporting the Community

Many of our staff volunteered to be redeployed to other partner organizations during the pandemic. Our staff assisted as COVID-19 Contact Tracers with the Eastern Ontario Health Unit, as Assessors with the Cornwall Community Hospital Assessment Centre, to provide vaccines to babies and toddlers rostered to physicians in solo practice and to provide outreach visits to isolated individuals at home (whether SVCHC clients or not).

The Centre remained open to see our clients in need of health care services, SVCHC staff tested (and continue to test as needed) our clients and staff for COVID-19, and made home visits to provide primary care and/or supplies to our clients. As part of a large community emergency relief effort spearheaded by the Regional Emergency Response Council (RERC), our SVCHC team helped assemble and deliver three food hampers initiatives for clients and community members in need.

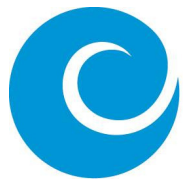
Our Registered Dietitians, Lindsay Boisvenue and Joelle Ciccarelli, contributed greatly to the Food Hamper initiative by volunteering to triage calls made to 2-1-1 and ensure everyone in need received a Food Hamper (which included many SVCHC clients referred by their provider). Our Dietitians created a detailed report outlining the results of the Food Hamper initiative (which was distributed widely by the Alliance and can be found [here](#)). An additional thank you to our Community Health Worker, Kim Brunet who supported the Food Hamper initiatives during and after they ended by managing a 7-day a week call centre line to ensure no one in-need fell between the cracks.



***“This was an eye opener for us and a good reminder that there are people in our community that are struggling, especially during COVID times.”***

**– SVCHC staff**

Our Dietitians had their plates full during this time, developing nutritional content for the [SVCHC Facebook page](#), filming and distributing YouTube videos, creating [Facebook "live" videos](#) in collaboration with the Cornwall Youth Hub, and filming video segments for Cogeco YourTV Cornwall, in addition to maintaining appointments with their clients.



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Our Health Promoters facilitated a 'Chronic Conditions Self-Management' class in partnership with Living Healthy Champlain and, for the first time, the 'Walk or Run to Quit' (a virtual smoking cessation program) was held in partnership with the Canadian Cancer Society, the Running Room, UBC, and the Public Health Agency of Canada, and was a huge success!

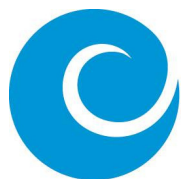
## **Working Together to Reach our Targets**

At the SVCHC, we pride ourselves on being an interprofessional primary health care team, working collaboratively to ensure the highest level of client service. This model of service delivery was enhanced during the pandemic as our Bridges Team increased meetings to three times per week (previously once a week) to ensure we were adequately supporting our clients and our staff.

The goal of the Bridges Team is to connect our clients with appropriate community resources. This was especially critical during the pandemic, as many clients had (and continue to have) increasingly complex needs and many external supports and services were closed or serving with reduced hours. The Bridges Team conducted social check-in calls and assisted SVCHC clients by delivering requisitions on behalf of the providers, picking up and delivering miscellaneous items (groceries, medications, NRT, etc.) and delivering and installing cooling equipment as part of a cooling initiative during the heat wave given that public, air-conditioned spaces were closed at that time.

The Lung Health Team, composed of a Nurse Practitioner and Respiratory Therapist, delivered 33% more client appointments during the first quarter of our fiscal year (Q1) compared to the same period in 2019-2020. These appointments were provided in person at the Centre, virtually, by telephone, and sometimes as an outreach visit to the client's home.

The Primary Care Outreach (PCO) team assists the vulnerable senior population (+65 years older) who required increasing support during this time. To support the community as best they could, our PCO team increased service delivery to clients of all ages, in addition to conducting check in calls and visits to their current clients. As an example of 'above and beyond', the PCO team held a case conference outside of the clients' window to ensure the client was safe and needs were met.



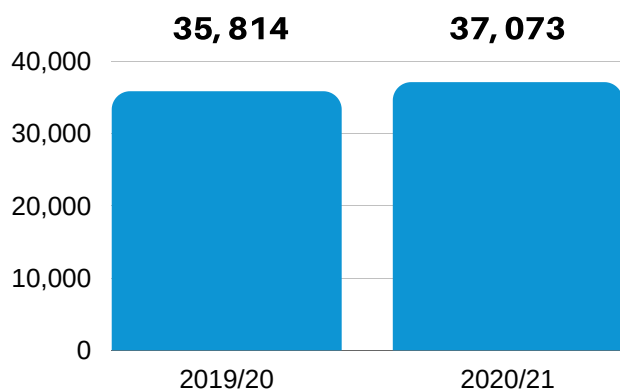
**Figure 1. number of confirmed appointments by each program type for last year's (LY) Quarter 1 (April-June 2019) vs. this year's (TY) Quarter 1 (April-June 2020)**

The following table demonstrates that our SVCHC level of service delivery was comparable to last year during the first quarter of the fiscal year (Q1) as we continued to actively service our clients, whether face-to-face, by telephone or by virtual appointments.

Program	Confirmed Appointments	
	LY Qtr1	TY Qtr1
Primary Care Providers	1635	2111
Nursing	751	573
Social Worker	97	114
Dietitians	112	135
Telemedicine	359	3
Respiratory Therapy/COPD	460	668
Primary Care Outreach	161	289
Cardiac Rehab Program	447	471
<b>Total Clients Seen</b>	<b>4022</b>	<b>4364</b>

*“Many of our clients have been in isolation for so long, just hearing a friendly voice on the phone can make their day.”*

– SVCHC Admin Staff

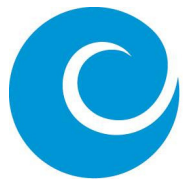


**Figure 2. total calls tracked (inbound and outbound) for last year's Quarter 1 vs. this year's Quarter 1**

In addition to the above-noted outstanding work, we must also acknowledge the tremendous effort of our Administrative Support Team. They are the first point of contact and the face of our organization. The volume of their work has also risen during the pandemic. The Administrative Support Team have been a source of inspiration – remaining pleasant and courteous despite the uncertainty of our times.

*“Needless to say, telephones were and continue to be our connection to our clients and our community.”*

– SVCHC Admin Staff



# Seaway Valley Community Health Centre

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Alongside our staff, our Board of Directors have also been extremely adaptive during the pandemic, quickly learning virtual platforms (GoToMeeting, then Zoom), and continuing to participate in monthly Board meetings and the Annual General Meeting held on June 25th.

We would like to highlight the exceptional work of Elizabeth Helmer, our Board President for her continued support and volunteer work at the Centre since the Province started opening up: acting as Screener, calling clients, working in the gardens, helping to re-organize our space, and assuming the lead governing role as President of the Board.

## **SVCHC in the Media**

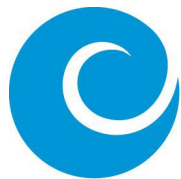
A Community Health Centre is agile and resilient and transforms to manage the needs of the community, particularly when there is a critical need. SVCHC is no exception as evidenced during the COVID-19 pandemic as our team works in varied and expanded roles to support the health and wellbeing of our community.

SVCHC staff have been very adaptive as they redeployed to assist our community as needed. As an example, our nurses redeployed to the COVID-19 Assessment Centre at the Cornwall Community Hospital, worked with the Eastern Ontario Health Unit in contact tracing, and expanded childhood vaccinations to all in need during COVID-19. Of particular note is the exemplary work from Elizabeth McRae (PCO nurse), Leslie-Anne McDonald (Cardiac Rehab nurse) and Lisa MacDonald (Primary Care Supervisor) who transitioned smoothly to a new environment at the Cornwall Assessment Centre.

Additionally, our staff delivered Meals-on-Wheels for Glen-Stor-Dun Lodge, assessed food security need and assembled and delivered food hampers to vulnerable seniors throughout our catchment area. Throughout all the changing roles, SVCHC provided training to ensure we were ready for the evolving virtual landscape. A local newspaper article highlighted the resiliency and resolve of our SVCHC Team, which can be found [here](#).

Also news-worthy was how our Board Members supported our efforts. Two news articles covered the donations made by the children of SVCHC Board Members who generously donated masks and raised money to support SVCHC clients in need. The articles for the [Chaudhry's donation](#) and the [Aziz's donation](#) are as linked. We are extremely appreciative of the generosity of these young community members - they are an inspiration to us all!





# Seaway Valley Community Health Centre

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## Volunteer Appreciation

Throughout the pandemic, SVCHC maintained our connection with our exceptional volunteers! Volunteers continue to support the Centre any way they can – including assisting the Team to conduct those vital check-in calls with our clients.

*“It makes all the difference in the world to receive a call from a volunteer.”*

– SVCHC client

In addition to working towards offering our programs virtually, we were able to offer two in-person health promotion programs over the summer. The ‘Wellness Walkers’ group have been able to meet twice a week to walk along the beautiful St. Lawrence River (following social distancing guidelines), reducing the sense of isolation during COVID-19.

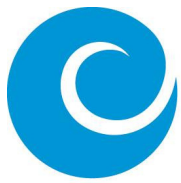


Our ‘Community Gardens’ program, which is an adapted community garden program at two social housing complexes in Cornwall, offered residents container garden options to grow their own healthy food at their units. These programs would not have been possible without the generous time and support provided by our volunteers!



We would like to thank Olivia Graham, the summer student, for all of her hard work and dedication with the SVCHC Community Programs, particularly the ‘Walk or Run to Quit’ program and the Community Gardens Project at both the Hamilton Crescent and Lemay sites.

As our annual volunteer appreciation luncheon had to be cancelled in April, SVCHC staff thanked our dedicated volunteers by creating a heartfelt [YouTube video](#) expressing our gratitude for all their support.



# Seaway Valley Community Health Centre

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## Looking Ahead

Throughout the Pandemic staff have remained nimble and resilient, mobilizing as needed to tackle the challenge of the day. We continue to adhere to all public health measures in place as we gradually re-establish our services towards a “New Normal.”

With the anticipated onset of the second COVID-19 wave, combined with the onset of the flu season, our team is rallying to be ready to actively serve in whatever capacity is needed. We will mobilize our professional and dedicated staff, assembling the necessary resources to tackle whatever lies ahead. We will support our clients with expanded virtual care options and work with our partners to ensure no one falls through the cracks.

Together we have made significant strides to maintain service delivery to our clients throughout the Pandemic. While we continue to navigate through the unknown, SVCHC continues to evolve and look ahead at future projects. A heartfelt thank you to everyone for your very hard work, dedication and resilience.

***We can take great pride in our efforts! Together we will continue to make a difference!***

***Debbie St John-de Wit, Executive Director***

***On behalf of the SVCHC Team***

## Testimonials from Staff

*“All staff depend on admin to be the go-to folks and the first six months of COVID have kept us rockin’ and rollin’.”*

*“As with many communities, the COVID-19 pandemic has presented challenges to our region but, despite those challenges, the team at SVCHC identified creative opportunities to stay on course in achieving the Centre’s mission.”*

*“Simply put, this pandemic has made our organization a force to be reckoned with, a force for all that is good in our community and it makes up so proud to work for such a caring organization.”*

*“The challenges of COVID were real but in the end, I feel there was numerous positives that have and will come out of it.”*