

REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF OTTAWA-CARLETON
MUNICIPALITÉ RÉGIONALE D'OTTAWA-CARLETON

REPORT
RAPPORT

Our File/N/Réf. RC
Your File/V/Réf.

DATE 15 September 1997

TO/DEST. Co-ordinator
 Community Services Committee

FROM/EXP. Medical Officer of Health

SUBJECT/OBJET **RESPONSE TO CSC INQUIRY NO. 31 - POSTPARTUM
SERVICES**

DEPARTMENTAL RECOMMENDATION

That Community Services Committee receive this report for information.

BACKGROUND

At the Community Services meeting of May 15, 1997, the Department submitted a report on its postpartum services. Subsequent to the report, the Committee Chair, M. Meilleur, requested the Department to further update the Committee on postpartum services in three (3) months.

PROGRAM SUMMARY

As indicated in the previous report, the Health Department offers a wide variety of services to parents of newborns in the community. Postpartum hospital stays for vaginally delivered women in our community range from 24 to 48 hours. This short hospital stay means demand on the services from the Health Department continues to rise. In the last few months this has been especially reflected in the number of requests by families for priority visits (average increase 10%) and in the Obstetrical Services, CCAC program, where the number of families receiving home visits has increased more than 100%, (400 to 500 service slips in January and February 1997 to 800 service slips in August 1997). Demand for other services: Parent Baby Information Line, Well-Baby Drop-Ins, also remains high.

In January of 1997, the Department informed Community Services Committee members of the collaborative project that it had started with the Children's Aid Society whereby the Society pays for the services of one Public Health Nurse to visit high risk families to augment the care currently offered. The project is working very well, however, it has become quite clear that it is costing the Department additional resources. This is a very important program in view of the increased needs of vulnerable families in our community.

The funding for the Healthy Babies/Healthy Children program has been confirmed and the program is anticipated to begin in January 1998. This is an early identification and intervention program in which families of young infants up to two years of age receive home visits by lay home visitors supervised by Public Health Nurses or equivalents. Because of the small number of families (597) served by the program and the long term nature of the intervention, it is not expected that this program will significantly reduce the demand on postpartum services provided by the Health Department, however it is another service to support families of young children.

SUMMARY

Families of newborns, particularly mothers, need to be supported to care for their new infant. A recent survey (June 1997) of 407 mothers in Ottawa-Carleton indicated 13% did not receive enough help to care for their newborn, and 9% reported they received no help at all. It is clear that services to support families with newborns should be expanded. Given that the pressure that we are presently feeling is mostly related to earlier hospital discharge, there is need to lobby for reinvestment of dollars into the community.

The Department has recently agreed to temporarily shift additional resources to meet increasing demand in the postpartum services. This will be reviewed in the future to determine if resources need to be reallocated permanently to ensure parents of newborns receive the postpartum support they need.

*Approved by,
Robert Cushman*