



# Community Health Needs and Resources

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Immunization Services in the Western Region –  
Learning from our Strengths  
Focus Group Results

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# **Immunization Services in the Western Region – Learning from our Strengths Focus Group**

## **Introduction**

### **Background**

The purpose of the Community Health Needs and Resources Assessment (CHNRA) focus groups is to provide further insight into the issues identified through the CHNRA surveys. Survey outcomes indicated that people in the western region are extremely satisfied with immunization services. Therefore to identify what attributes of immunization services led to high satisfaction rates, and to understand how this information can be used to improve other services within the region, immunization services were identified as a topic for further exploration. This report provides a summary of the focus group related to immunization services.

### **Methodology**

A focus group was conducted regionally, to explore immunization services. A discussion guide (Appendix A) was developed to identify the process and content for the focus group. Potential focus group participants were identified through the Community Health Nurses in the region based on their involvement with immunization services. The Community Health Manager organized the focus group and potential participants were contacted by the community health manager to invite them to participate. This was to give the manager an opportunity to briefly describe the process, reason for focus group and to ensure that the times and location proposed were convenient. The focus group was facilitated by the Community Health Manager, with support from the CDPM Manager (Diabetes Focus). The discussion guide was utilized. Following the focus group, the Community Health Manager summarized the discussion of each question. A summary report was compiled and sent to participants to ensure that the summary accurately reflected the discussion and that no issues were misinterpreted or missed. The following sections provide a summary of the discussion from these focus groups and a discussion of the themes that emerged.

## **Results**

The Immunization Services focus group was held on May 24, 2017 at Western Memorial Hospital and MP Place in Port aux Basques via videoconference. There were four participants. Each participant either received immunization services or was a relation of someone who received the service in the region.

**Question 1:** What are the features of this service that lead to feelings of satisfaction with the service?

**Summary of Responses:**

The participants identified benefits of being contacted by Western Health to book child immunization appointments. They were pleased that it was not their responsibility to call for booking as they were already tasked with many duties of parenthood.

Participants expressed that because physicians refer to the public health service regularly it showed their support of the service and in turn they gained confidence in the service as well.

**Question 2:** Do you have any comments about how people access immunization services?

**Summary of Responses:**

The participants identified that because of the reminder call prior to their appointment they had the opportunity to book an alternate day or time if the current appointment was no longer convenient. They considered this to be valuable and allowed for flexibility in their busy schedules.

**Question 3:** Do you have any thoughts as to if the service is offered in a way that puts the needs of the client first?

**Summary of Responses:**

The participants felt that with regard to the child immunization services their needs were put first.

They felt that the flu vaccination clinic in the Port aux Basques region was disappointing this year due to location and lack of communication to the public about details of this clinic. They expressed that due to these factors many family and friends did not avail of the service.

The Deer Lake participants felt the flu clinic was well communicated in their region with the use of posters on the pharmacy board and in grocery stores. They advertisements for clinics throughout the community increased uptake to the service.

The most consistent message was that participants felt a “drop in” flu vaccine clinic was the most convenient for the majority of the population.

**Question 4:** Do you have any thoughts about how immunization services provide good continuity of care? Continuity of care refers to your experience as the client, your interaction with providers and having access to providers with good interpersonal skills and a wealth of knowledge in immunization services.

**Summary of Responses:**

Participants were confident in identifying that Public Health nurses consistently made parents aware of length of visit and what to expect during the visit. The participants did not feel rushed and were encouraged to ask questions. The Public Health nurse took time to explain any possible side effects of the immunizations, discussed proper dosing of medication, specifically Tylenol, and stressed the importance of dosing the medication by weight and not by age. In addition, participants noted that a handout was given at the end of each visit for reference at home. Overall, all participants felt that Public Health Nurses were experts in immunization services and a wealth of knowledge.

**Question 5:** Do you have any thoughts as to the effectiveness of immunization services? Are the services effective in reaching all age groups?

### **Summary of Responses:**

The participants felt that the majority of children in the region were immunized.

In both Port aux Basques and Deer Lake they felt seniors and middle age groups were not well informed about the importance of immunization. This discussion was focused on the flu vaccine.

It is important to note that some physician offices offered flu clinics on weekends and after hours in the Deer Lake area. This was of great benefit to many people and shift workers expressed the value in this after hour service.

Participants discussed concern that physicians may not offer the flu vaccine next season. This was information they had heard throughout the community. They felt that uptake for middle aged and senior groups would be decreased if this happens.

**Question 6:** How can we use these features to improve other services provided by Western Health?

### **Summary of Responses:**

All participants felt that advertising and communication via social media, posters, local television channels and newspaper was crucial.

Twitter was not utilized by any of the participants.

**Question 7:** Taking into consideration the items we have discussed, what is the most important to remember?

### **Summary of Responses:**

Public Health immunization services are well organized and accessible for community members. This includes services from infancy to school aged children.

There is a need continued education to reinforce the importance of immunization for adult populations. Participants felt that physicians could provide more education and better promote vaccination with clients they see in practice. This was identified as a way to increase uptake of flu vaccine in particular.

**Question 8:** Have we missed anything?

Participants had no further comments to add.

## **Discussion**

The Immunization Focus Group consisted of four participants and was conducted on May 24, 2017 at Western Memorial Hospital and MP Place. It is important to note this was the third attempt at rescheduling this particular focus group for the region due to difficulty with recruitment of participants. However, of the four who participated in the focus group, two were from Port aux Basques and two from the Deer Lake area. Thus the following themes emerged through the discussion.

**Theme #1: Convenience-** Respondent indicated they had good access to immunizations for infants, children and the school aged children because the Public Health nurse was organized and arranged the appointments in advance for infants and preschool and for the school aged they would send consent home

to parents via the school and once immunized the children were given their handout to be returned to the parent. As well, if a child was absent the nurse ensured to return and give the students the immunization that was missed. However, the flu clinics in Port aux Basques were identified as an area that could have benefitted from a better location to offer the walk in flu clinic.

**Theme #2: Communication-** Participants were pleased how the entire booking of appointments and follow ups were proactive and organized. They were appreciative of the friendly reminders by the admin support the day before and it also, allowed you to reschedule easily if there were conflicts in their schedule. As well, the Community Health Nurse often advises the clients to call the office if they have any questions or concerns and readily returns any telephone calls as soon as possible.

**Theme #3: Access to Service-** It was discussed that the overall wait time for the children and school age is nil but there was concern identified regarding the flu vaccines. Particularly, it was identified that seniors would have a lesser wait time at a physician's office rather than having to go to a center in which there may be a line up. The concern being that some seniors may not be able to stand for a great length of time. As a result, the participants further identified that physicians should still be available to administer flu shots in their clinic

**Theme #4: Confidence in Providers-** Overall, the consensus among the participants was that the Public Health nurses were able to answer all concerns and offer suggestions when required for various situations. The participants felt the information is consistent and up to date for them. Again, the Community Health Nurse often advises the clients to call if they have any questions or concerns.

## **Conclusion**

Immunization services were identified as strength throughout the region. Consequently, the focus group discussed why this particular service was identified and how we can continue to build upon it in an efficient and effective way to the clients in our region. Several themes became obvious in the participants responses. First, the convenience of the service is often timely and arranged via the Community Health office for postnatal clients, and the follow thru for the school aged is remarkable. The second theme that became apparent was communication. Participants felt that the booking of appointments, follow up and reminder calls is one of the key reasons for the success of the program because they do not need to be responsible for making these arrangements themselves. Thirdly, access to service for the infant thru to school aged meets the need of clients. However, it was identified that the flu vaccinations should still remain with the physicians for the population of seniors because there would be a lesser wait and many seniors may not be able to tolerate any significant wait time due to poor health or ambulatory deficits. And finally, the knowledge base of the Community Health Nurse is always consistent, up to date and hence confidence in the providers. Therefore, it is these themes that clearly identifies why the immunization services has been identified as a strength in the CHNRA in the region.

## **Appendix A**

### Immunization Services Discussion Guide

# Focus Group Introduction

**DURATION:** 1-1.5 hours max

## WELCOME

- Welcome participants
- Thank participants for agreeing to be part of the focus group; appreciate willingness to participate
- Obtain verbal or written consent to participate
- Collect record of attendance

## INTRODUCTIONS

- Introduce moderator and note taker
- Round room introductions

## PURPOSE OF FOCUS GROUP

- Explain the purpose of the focus group
- Provide some background information regarding Community Health Needs and Resources Assessment and survey findings.

## GROUND RULES (Can be placed on Flip Chart)

- **Helpful tips for the focus group to run smoothly and respectfully for all participants:**
- We would like everyone to participate.
- Only one person talks at a time. It is important that there are no side bar discussions and that everyone is listening as one person speaks.
- Confidentiality is very important so that everyone is comfortable in expressing their true opinions. We will be taking notes, however we will not identify anyone by name. You will remain anonymous.
- There are no right or wrong answers to questions – just ideas, experiences and opinions, which are all valuable.
- It is important to hear all sides of the issue – both the positive and negative.
- Aim to start and end on time.
- Does anyone else have any 'ground rules' they would like to add?

## CONCLUSION

- Summarize answers to the questions that are recorded. Ask: Is this an adequate summary? Have we missed anything?
- When the focus group is complete, thank participants for their participation and the note taker for taking notes.

## **Focus Group – Immunization Services**

### **Background**

Recently WH has completed a needs assessment survey with residents of the western region. Over 700 people responded to the survey and expressed their opinions on a variety of questions about satisfaction with health services and community services, identification of strength and issues within the community for example. Western Health uses this information to help plan for service delivery. After WH reviewed the information from the surveys, we identified areas that we want to know more about, therefore, we conduct focus groups.

While we need to learn more about our challenges and weaknesses, it is also important that we recognize the strengths our region has to offer, so that we can understand how to use strengths effectively to build health and strong communities and high quality services. The purpose of the focus group is to explore results which indicated that people in the western region are very satisfied with immunization services. The purpose of the focus group is to identify what attributes of immunization services led to high satisfaction rates, and to understand how this information can be used to improve other services within the region.

### **Survey Results:**

- Respondents were asked to identify their level of satisfaction with 27 separate health services.
- Overall, respondents indicated varying levels of satisfaction from 33% satisfied to 100% satisfied.
- There were ten services where at least 75% of respondents were satisfied with the services.
- For one service in particular, everyone who needed or used the service was satisfied. That is 484 different people all reported they were satisfied with the immunization services. This was consistent for every area of the region from Burgeo to Port Saunders, and is considerably higher than some other services.

### **Focus Group Questions**

1. What are the features of this service that lead to feelings of satisfaction with the service?

Probes (Aspects of Quality):

- a. (Access) Do you have any comments about how people access immunization services? (Ex. How appointments are booked, reminders sent, etc.)
  - b. (Client Centeredness) Do you have any thoughts as to if the service is offered in a way that puts the needs of the client first?
  - c. (Continuity of Care) Do you have any thoughts as to how immunization services are provided in a way that they have good continuity of care. That is you as a patient have a good experience over the time you are involved with immunization services, for example you have good access to services, providers have good interpersonal skills and information flows well between staff and organizations.
  - d. (Effectiveness) Do you have any thoughts as to the effectiveness of immunization services?
  - e. (Efficiency) Do you have any thoughts as to the efficiency of immunization services?
2. How can we use these features to improve others services provided by Western Health?
    - a. Same probes (Access, Client Centeredness, Continuity of Care, Effectiveness, Efficiency)
  3. Of all the things we have discussed, what is the most important to remember?
  4. Have we missed anything?

**Focus Group Target Audience:**

- Clients who have utilized immunization services in the past 6 months
  - School Immunization (parent)
  - Flu Clinic
  - Child Health Clinic
  - Each PHC area
  - Community stakeholders (school, clergy, PHC team, RCMP, CAC)

**Additional sources of information to be considered: nil**