

Delivering Programs and Services

Rural Reality: Rural service providers are faced with the challenges of working in regions characterized by small populations, geographically dispersed communities and long distances from urban centres.

Impact on Service Providers:

- » It may be difficult for service providers to refer or recommend programs and services to families when very few, or none, are available locally.
- » Staff of rural-serving agencies may have to spend more time travelling to deliver programs and services, than their urban colleagues.

Rural Reality: Rural communities tend to face greater barriers recruiting and retaining professionals than their urban counterparts.^{4/5/6}

Impact on Service Providers:

- » A small staff base requires professionals to have a broader range of skills to function effectively, posing significant pressure on rural professionals to develop and maintain an increased scope of practice.
- » Frequent staff changes can result in additional work for the staff that remain, contributing to high stress levels and employee burnout.
- » High staff turnover creates additional expenses for agencies, who need to recruit, hire and re-train replacements.
- » Frequent staff changes impact service provider’s ability to deliver consistent and quality services.
- » During vacancies, agencies may be forced to reduce some programming in order to maintain core services.
- » Lack of professionals can contribute to long wait times for services, prompting families to travel outside their home communities to receive the support they need.

Rural Reality: Rural communities tend to have a smaller tax base, a limited donor pool for fundraising and more difficulty competing for open grants and funding.⁷

Impact on Service Providers:

- » Funding challenges impact the programs and services agencies are able to provide.
- » Service providers, given the rural realities (e.g. travel distances), often face challenges in registering families for programs. Low registration can result in program cancellation, which reduces the ability of an agency to sustain funding.

Rural communities are an important and vibrant part of Eastern Ontario.

In fact, 25% of us living in Eastern Ontario are living in rural areas.^{2/3} To make decisions that work for our communities, we must take into account rural Ontario’s unique strengths and challenges.

Population Split in Eastern Ontario¹	Rural	Urban
Hastings	63%	37%
Lanark	62%	38%
Leeds and Grenville	68%	32%
Lennox and Addington	100%	0%
Ottawa	4%	96%
Prescott and Russell	82%	18%
Prince Edward	83%	17%
Renfrew	70%	30%
Stormont, Dundas, Glengarry and Akwesasne	59%	41%

Things to consider...

- » How are your decisions improving accessibility for rural families?
- » How are your decisions improving the fiscal situation of community service providers serving rural areas?
- » How are your decisions supporting the recruitment and retention of professionals in rural communities?
- » How will you ensure that the rural reality is taken into account when priorities are discussed and decisions are made?

Find more resources at www.child-youth-health.net

References

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 2 Community Information Database. *Community Profiles*. Available online.
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(*Regional Data Set*). Available online.
 4 Rural Ontario Municipal Association. (2011). *A Voice for Rural and Northern Ontario*. Available online.
 5 Paliadelis, P.S., Parmenter, G., Parker, V., et al. (2012). *The challenges confronting clinicians in rural acute care settings: a participatory research project*. *Rural and Remote Health* 12: 2017.

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 6 Rural and Northern Health Care Panel. *Rural and Northern Health Care Framework/Plan*. Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Available online.
 7 Rural Ontario Municipal Association. (2011). *A Voice for Rural and Northern Ontario*. Available online.