



Sentinel School Health Monitoring Program

School Name



Period ending February 9, 2007

The Sentinel School Health Monitoring Program was developed to monitor and collect data on student absenteeism due to illness to identify trends or clusters of illness within school communities and York Region.¹ Ideally, school absenteeism data can aid in the early detection of outbreaks before they reach their peak level of infection.

This document is intended to provide feedback on the number of absences for your school as reported by the Sentinel School Health Monitoring Program on a monthly basis. It presents daily absenteeism counts for overall and illness-specific absences, as well as summaries of important disease trends occurring in York Region.

For the purposes of this program:

'All Cause' refers to absences that are due to any reason. Absences in this category include students determined to be absent (no reason), excused absence, music lessons, notified late, religious holidays, as well as illness with a medical reason.

'All Illness' refers to only absences that are due to illness with a medical reason.

Respiratory illnesses are characterized by the following symptoms: persistent cough, either dry or productive; either a runny nose or nasal congestion; and/or sore throat or hoarseness.

Enteric illnesses are characterized by the following symptoms: diarrhea; vomiting; and/or stomach cramps.

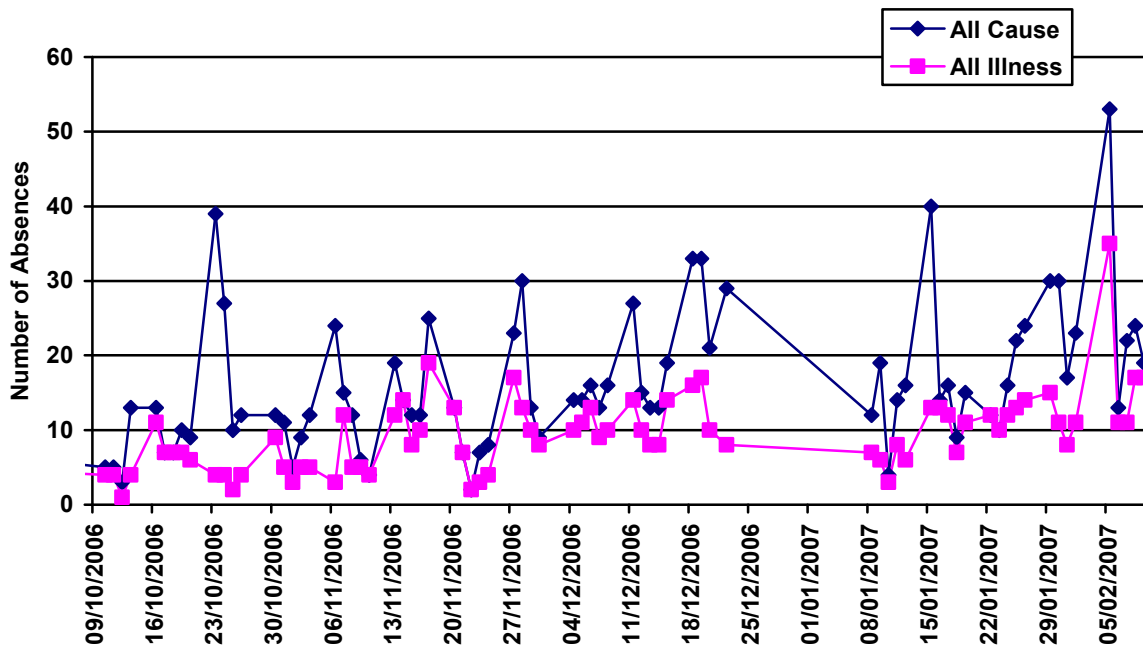
'Other' illnesses include those that are not classified as either respiratory or enteric. If parents report symptoms such as fever, malaise, lethargy, etc. without any of the above features, or if parents do not report any symptoms at all, those illnesses would be reported in this category.

¹ York Region District School Board & York Region Health Services. Sentinel School Health Monitoring Program – Terms of Reference. Revised September 2006.

Absenteeism Information

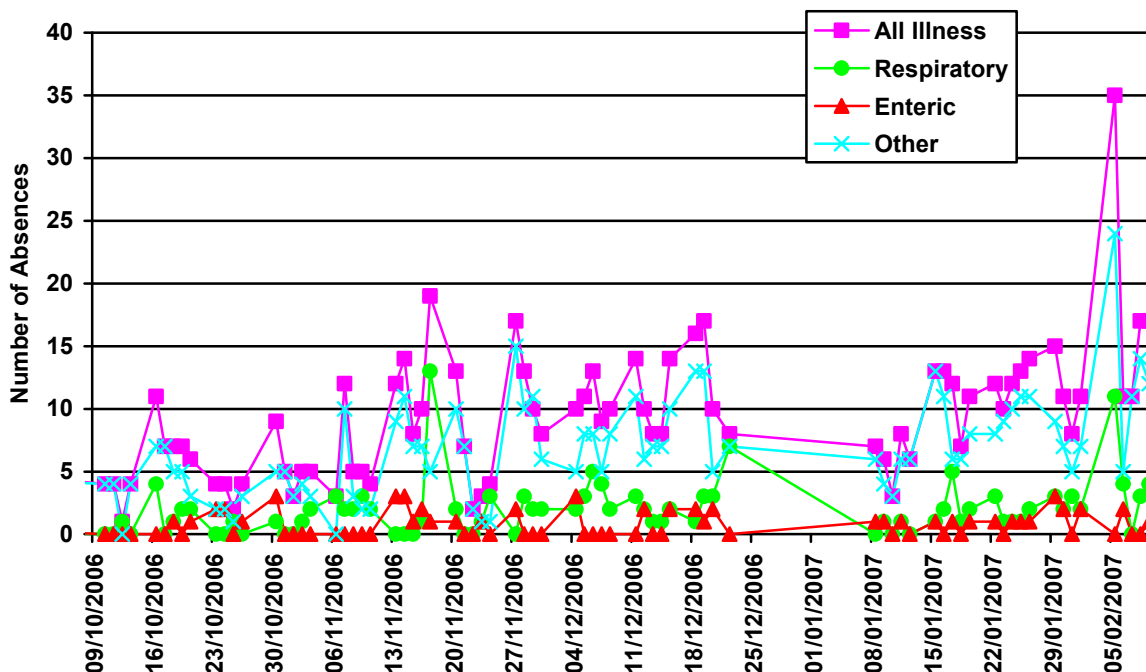
- A spike in overall absenteeism was observed January 15th coinciding with a winter storm and subsequent school bus cancellations. No corresponding spike in reported absenteeism due to illness was observed on this date (Figure 1).
- A spike in overall absenteeism, as well as absenteeism due to illness, was observed February 5th (Figure 1). When examined by category, this spike can be attributed to increases in absences classified as “Other” and “Respiratory” (Figure 2). The following day absenteeism rates returned to normal levels and York Region Health Services will continue to monitor the situation.
- No data were reported for the following days:
 - February 2nd (P.A. day).
- The number of absent students due to all causes ranged between 9 and 53 students (i.e., less than 8% overall absenteeism) for the period examined. The number of absent students due to illness ranged between 7 and 35 students (i.e., less than 6% absenteeism due to illness).

Figure 1. Number of Absences due to ‘All Cause’ and ‘All Illness’ between October 9, 2006 and February 9, 2007



Note: The dates listed above correspond to the Monday of each week.

Figure 2. Number of Absences due to illness classified as 'Respiratory', 'Enteric' or 'Other' between October 9, 2006 and February 9, 2007



Note: The dates listed above correspond to the Monday of each week.

Important Disease Trends in York Region and the Province

- During December 17, 2006 to January 6, 2007 (i.e., weeks 51-52 of 2006 and week 1 of 2007), sporadically occurring influenza activity² was reported to the MOHLTC by York Region. During January 7 to January 20, 2007, localized influenza activity was reported to the MOHLTC by York Region.

Currently, as of January 20, 2007, Toronto is the only health region reporting widespread influenza activity. Source: Ontario Influenza Bulletin, Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, Dec. 17, 2006 – Jan. 20, 2007.

² Influenza activity levels are defined as follows:

Widespread influenza activity: sporadically occurring ILI and laboratory confirmed influenza case(s) together with outbreaks of ILI in schools and/or worksites or laboratory confirmed influenza in residential institutions occurring in greater than or equal to 50% of the influenza surveillance regions

Localized influenza activity: sporadically occurring ILI and laboratory confirmed influenza case(s) together with outbreaks of ILI in schools and/or worksites or laboratory confirmed influenza in residential institutions occurring in less than 50% of the influenza surveillance regions

Sporadic influenza activity: Sporadically occurring ILI and laboratory confirmed influenza case(s) with NO outbreaks detected within the influenza surveillance region

No Activity: No laboratory confirmed influenza cases or outbreak detected during the past four weeks within the influenza surveillance region, however, sporadically occurring ILI may be reported

- York Region, as well as Ontario as a whole,³ has experienced an increase in the number of reported confirmed cases of pertussis in 2006 compared to previous years. To date, the 2006 pertussis rate is 24% higher compared to the 2005 rate and 250% higher compared to the rate in 2004.

In response to observed increases in pertussis rates in York Region, a number of community educational campaigns are currently being developed by York Region Health Services, including a community-wide campaign to highlight National Immunization Week (April 23 to April 27, 2007). Activities will include educational material in local newspapers & community bulletin boards, and local television interviews. The goals of these initiatives are to increase the awareness of pertussis and to promote the prevention of pertussis through timely vaccination

Report submissions

- All reports expected for January 12th to February 9th have been received.
- Currently, reports are being forwarded to York Region Health Services on the same day that data are being collected. For example, absenteeism data for February 9th was received that afternoon.

Program Update

- Data analysis of historical absenteeism data for all YRDSB elementary schools continues. These data will help identify baseline levels of absenteeism within schools for the early detection of outbreaks.
- On February 7th, attendance secretaries from 7 of the 12 participating schools met to provide feedback with regards to the data collection process of this program. It was a wonderful opportunity to finally meet in person. As part of this focus group, we discussed some of the obstacles that have been overcome over the past several months and shared the expertise that had been accumulated around the table with respect to the collection of absenteeism data.
- York Region Health Services will be organizing a meeting for principals or vice-principals to provide a summary of this year's Sentinel School Health Monitoring program activities and to receive feedback with regards to this program. This meeting will occur some time during the week of May 7th to 11th (excluding May 10th). The details of time and location will be forwarded to schools once they have been confirmed.

Thank you for your participation. If you have any comments, questions, or suggestions about this program, please feel free to contact us at sentinel@york.ca.

³ Public Health Agency of Canada. (2006). Infectious Diseases News Brief – February 10, 2006. [online] cited October 17, 2006, from <www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/bid-bmi/dsd-dsm/nb-ab/2006/nb0606_e.html>.