



# Haldimand Health: Rurality Blog

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Haldimand County, located along the north shore of Lake Erie and the Grand River, is home to charming rural communities, with notable cultural sites featuring an abundance of natural attractions to enjoy. This county's close-knit community is located a mere 20km south of Hamilton, which serves as the closest urban centre for service provision, employment, and healthcare to many local residents. While the rural nature of Haldimand county imparts certain uniqueness and charm to the region, it also imposes many challenges to healthcare access and provision.

This blog post outlines the challenges facing Haldimand County, as well as the work currently underway by healthcare providers to address health disparities in the county. Residents of Haldimand, especially the more rural communities within the county, often have limited access to health care services, specialists, and subspecialists compared to their urban counterparts. Several factors continue to challenge healthcare access including lack of public transportation, the distance to travel to healthcare providers outside of the region, lower socioeconomic status and limited job opportunities that often impact residents' health and social well-being. Care providers in rural areas are often required to identify barriers to healthcare access and have to fill the gaps while receiving minimal interprofessional supports to aid in a person's care needs.

These challenges ultimately contribute to disproportionate service provision and impact health outcomes. Despite facing healthcare challenges, Haldimand has embraced the inner strength of rural communities' commitment to a true community of family and camaraderie of support.



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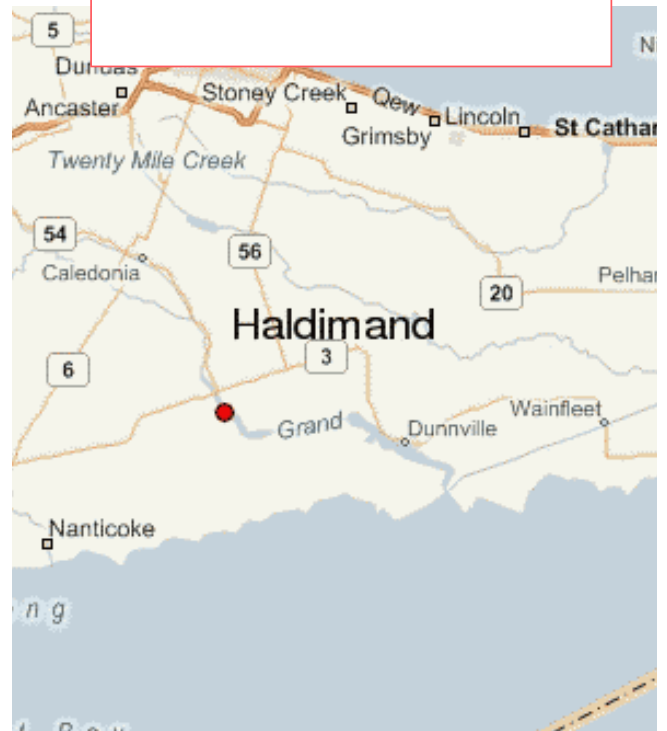
# Haldimand Health: Rurality Blog Continued

Haldimand organizations and providers embody strength, perseverance, and collaboration working tirelessly to reduce disparities in smaller communities. Providers feel a strong sense of belonging to the Haldimand community and are the beating heart of the county. Providers consistently go above and beyond to create a thriving and healthy community and leverage these characteristics to improve the health of the community. These attributes have created a community, where community members work together to develop new initiatives, have high levels of volunteerism, and heightened community ownership.

Despite having limited resources at their disposal, health organizations within Haldimand have been pursuing closer collaborations, to break down barriers and deliver holistic and patient-centered care. Organizations often lean on each other to optimize and expand their services and scope, recognizing the importance of preserving existing patient pathways, and establishing new ones to improve continuity of care within the county.



Map of Haldimand County



The utilization of Integrated models of care, where multiple service providers come together from various sectors to support patients, combined with comprehensive care coordination, addresses these challenges, and facilitates improved access to care for rural residents. Integrated care allows various organizations and agencies to come together to form true partnerships and utilize transition planning networks. It acts as a liaison to allow providers to collaboratively co-design care and breaks down silos within the health system. Integrated care models can address the social, physical, and mental health of residents, and allow us to combat structural and systemic barriers. This will allow successful holistic care provided to the community.

# *Building community health together.*

Although rural communities such as Haldimand County face additional and different barriers compared to their urban counterparts, integrated models of care provide one solution to improve access to specialized care in rural communities. Haldimand's sense of community has laid a strong foundation to foster growth, community, and belonging highlighting the strong collaboration and engagement

engagement observed among organizations and care providers in the area to demonstrate that these barriers can in fact be addressed and broken down. With further collaboration and exploration of innovative care models by care providers, Haldimand county can become a model for rural healthcare.



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