

Special schools or classes for various groups of handicapped children are usually operated by school boards whereas most of the schools for the deaf and for the blind are residential schools operated by provincial governments.

5.2.6 Public health

Provincial and local structure. Provincial health departments, in co-operation with the regional and local health authorities, administer such services as environmental sanitation, communicable disease control, maternal and child health, school health, nutrition, dental health, occupational health, public health laboratories and vital statistics. Most provinces have delegated certain health responsibilities to health units in rural regions and to municipal health departments in urban centres. Several provinces also provide services directly to their thinly populated northern parts. Certain regulatory and preventive services, including case-finding, screening, diagnosis and referral, health education, personal health care, and supervision in certain areas of treatment services conducted through clinics and home visits, have continued to be the responsibility of local health authorities.

As metropolitan areas and population densities have increased, effective administration has required a broader geographical base. Some smaller local health services are provided or supervised by a regional health unit, or a regional structure intermediate between provincial departments and local health units provides technical advice. Some urban boards of health in metropolitan areas have been amalgamated to increase their effectiveness.

Maternal and child health. Public health nurses employed by local health services carry out programs of preventive health care to mothers, the newborn, and children through clinics, home and hospital visits, and school health services. All provincial health departments have established maternal and child health consultant services to co-operate with the public health nursing services. The maternal and child health services also undertake studies in maternal and child care, including hospital care, and assist in the training of nursing personnel.

Nutrition and health education. Provincial health departments and some municipal or regional health departments employ consultants in nutrition to extend technical guidance and education to health and welfare agencies, nursing homes and other care institutions and hospitals. They also provide diet counselling to selected patient groups such as diabetics, and conduct nutritional surveys and other research. Most provincial health departments have a division or unit of health education under a full-time professional health educator to promote public knowledge of health needs and measures. These divisions provide educational materials to other divisions of the health department, local health authorities, schools, voluntary associations, and the public. Many educational activities are directed to accident prevention and to changing habits harmful to health, such as cigarette smoking and the excessive use of alcohol and other drugs. All health workers carry out health education as part of their normal activities.

Dental health. Public dental health programs at the provincial level have been largely preventive, but increasing emphasis is now being given to dental care. Dental clinics conducted by local health services are generally restricted to pre-school and younger school-age groups. A number of provinces send dental teams to remote areas lacking such services, while the four western provinces have dental care schemes of varying coverage for welfare recipients. Other dental health programs are directed to the training of dentists and dental hygienists, conducting dental surveys, and the extension of water fluoridation.

Communicable disease control. The larger provincial health departments have separate divisions of communicable disease control headed by full-time epidemiologists; in others this function is combined with one or more community health services. Local health authorities organize public clinics for immunization against diphtheria, tetanus, poliomyelitis, whooping cough, smallpox and measles. They also engage in case-finding and diagnostic services in co-operation with public health laboratories and private physicians. Special services for tuberculosis and venereal disease have already been described.

Public health laboratories. All provinces maintain a central public health laboratory and most have branch laboratories to assist local health agencies and the medical profession in the