



## Community Paramedicine Assistance to First Nations Evacuees During Natural Disasters

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# Northwestern Ontario Geography



Pikangikum First Nation is located approximately 500km from Thunder Bay and 1500 km from Toronto.

# 2019 Pikangikum Forest Fire Evacuations



# Pikangikum First Nation

Pikangikum First Nation is a remote settlement of approximately 4500 people (2019) located in the Sioux Lookout District of northwestern Ontario.

Pikangikum maintains one of the highest rates of original language retention of any First Nation in Northern Ontario. The language is Ojibwemowin, the major dialect of Anishnaabe peoples. (2005 Wawatay Native Communications Society survey)



- The community of Pikangikum is among the most populated among the First Nation Communities in the Sioux Lookout District
- 86% of the population being 39 years of age or younger
- The population trend continues to grow at over 3% annually.
- The birth rate per capita is the highest in the Sioux Lookout Zone.
- Current statistics indicate the over one-third of Pikangikum is under 9 years of age.





- The community often faces health, social and crime-related crises, such as medical emergencies, suicides, alcohol/drug/solvent abuse incidents, and a higher crime rate.
- Community based programs are under-resourced, thus compromising the community's ability to provide programming that will meet their needs.



# Cochrane District acting as Evacuation Host Community

Kashechewan First Nation was evacuated as their community was under a flood risk

- 847 evacuees in Timmins
- 539 in Kapuskasing
- 400 throughout smaller communities
- received 96 calls for service



## 3 days later...Pikangikum First Nation is Evacuated

- Timmins received 200 evacuees
  - Kapuskasing taking in 800
  - other communities a further 400
- 
- In the 6 weeks Cochrane District acted as a Host Community 154 calls for service we received





- Large increase in call volume for some of our smaller communities and over the 15 weeks that evacuees were hosted
- Some paramedics experienced compassion fatigue



# City of Thunder Bay Acting as a Host Community

- 3 Separate host locations identified in the city of Thunder Bay
- Use of Hotels to house vulnerable evacuated community members
- City resources mobilized



# 3 Host Location Sites within the City of Thunder Bay

## First Evacuation June 3 to June 16, 2019

- Victoria Inn- 377 evacuees
- Valhalla Inn- 47 evacuees

## Second Evacuation July 10 to July 21, 2019

- Victoria Inn- 258 evacuees
- Valhalla Inn- 392 evacuees
- Airlane- 308 evacuees





# Role of Community Paramedicine and Health Sector Officer

- Ensure appropriate medical care and continuous medical support for the evacuees throughout their stay in the host community.
- Avoid a potential overburden to the host community medical and emergency resources.
- Liaise and coordinate with on site Management and Head Quarters.
- Ensure coordination with community resources and facilitate the availability of appropriate medical care for evacuees.



# Needs Identified



- Medications: refill medication prescription, transferring medication prescription, shipping and storage
- Clinical Appointments: Prenatal care, wound care, walk-in clinics, traditional wellness
- Emergency Care: EMS response, TBRHSC ER, on site first aid and Paramedic/ Nurse Response





# Health Room/ Nursing Station

This acts as a medical base of operations and drop in center for medical needs. The Nursing Station can act as a multi purpose health and wellness area in which evacuees can report medical concerns and ask questions regarding health and wellness. The Nursing Station can also act as a mental health drop in center were on site counsellors and mental health professionals can support the individual needs of the evacuees.



# Mental Health and Addictions

Counsellors are made available to help with potential mental trauma/stress of evacuation. The help to adjust individuals into the new environment and help cope with family and/or addiction issues.



# Proactive Health Care Model

## Health & Wellness Checks

Many evacuees are reluctant or unable to attend nursing station for medical needs and require individual room checks to ensure health and safety. Paramedics are able to check vitals signs and assess room conditions. This assists clients with mobility restrictions and/or social isolation.





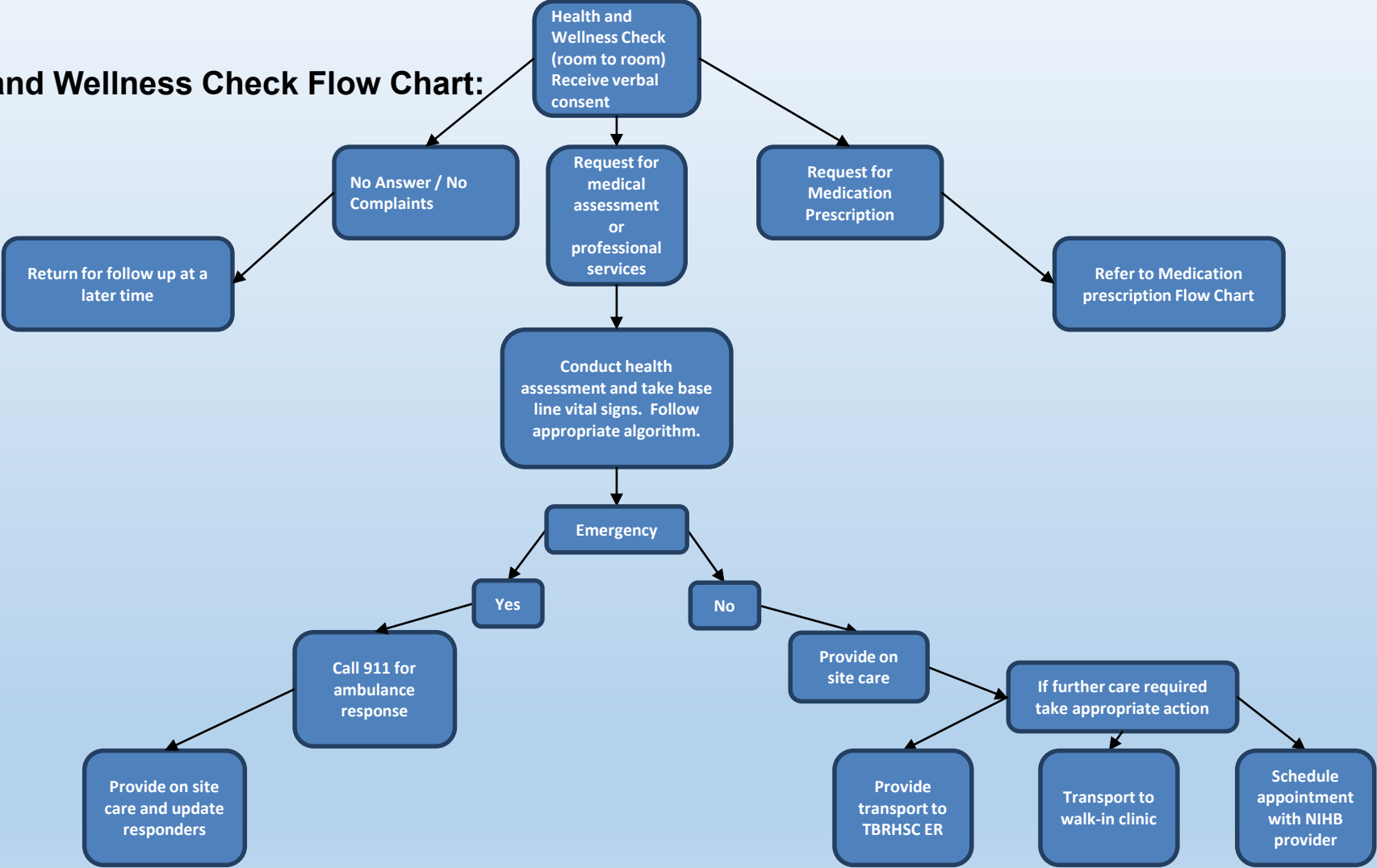
# Community Liaisons and Safety Planning

A plan created with advice from senior members of the evacuated community in the event an individual's welfare may be compromised.



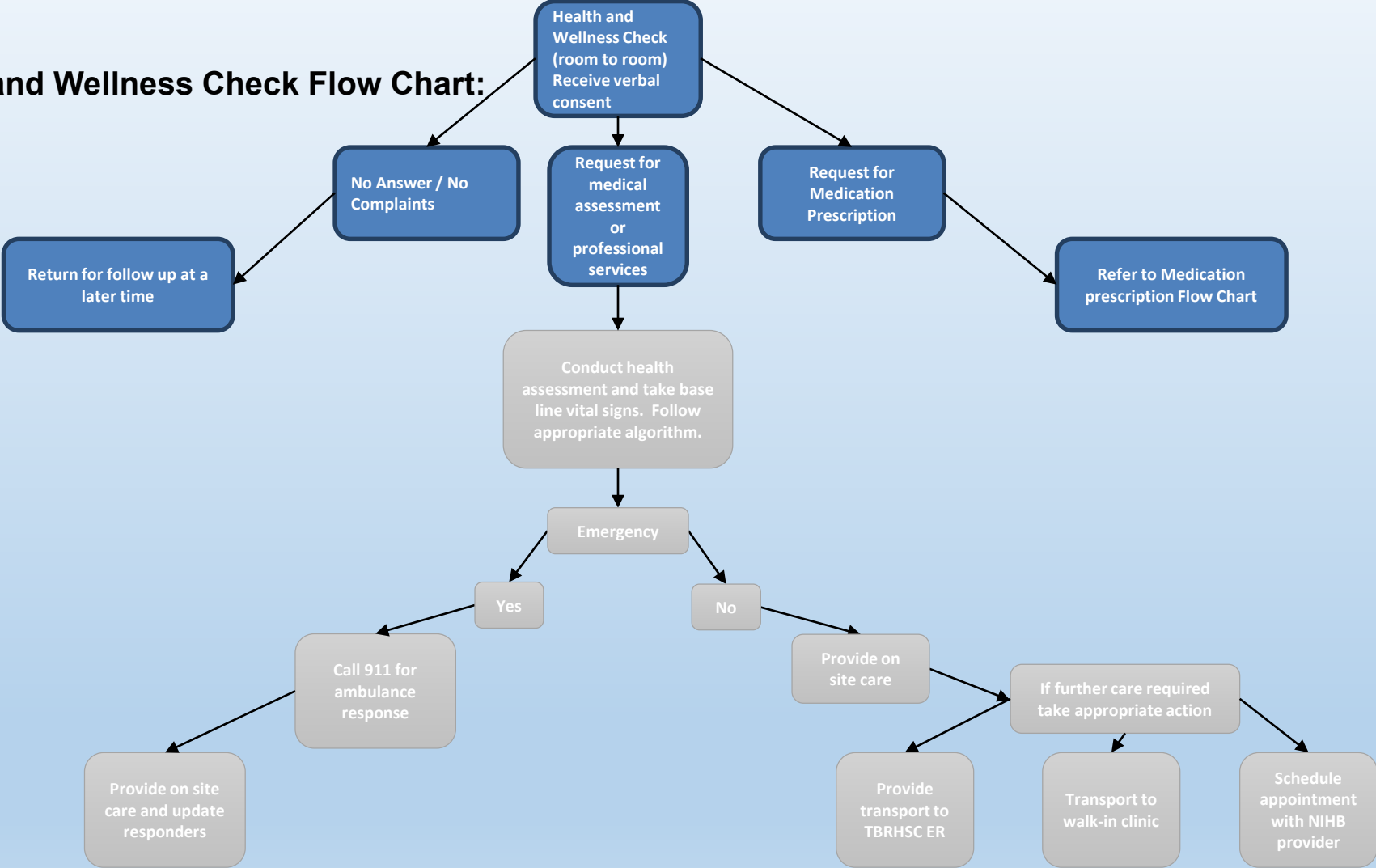
- Identify individuals who will have a high level of responsibility for community members
- Community Liaisons will be informed and requested to help resolve the situation in the event of issues such as: child supervision, substance misuse, lost/stolen items, or inability to locate an evacuated community member
- An internet based social media webpage is an excellent tool for Community Liaisons and Command staff to post important information on upcoming events, notification of any planning changes and maintain communications with evacuated community members

**Health and Wellness Check Flow Chart:**

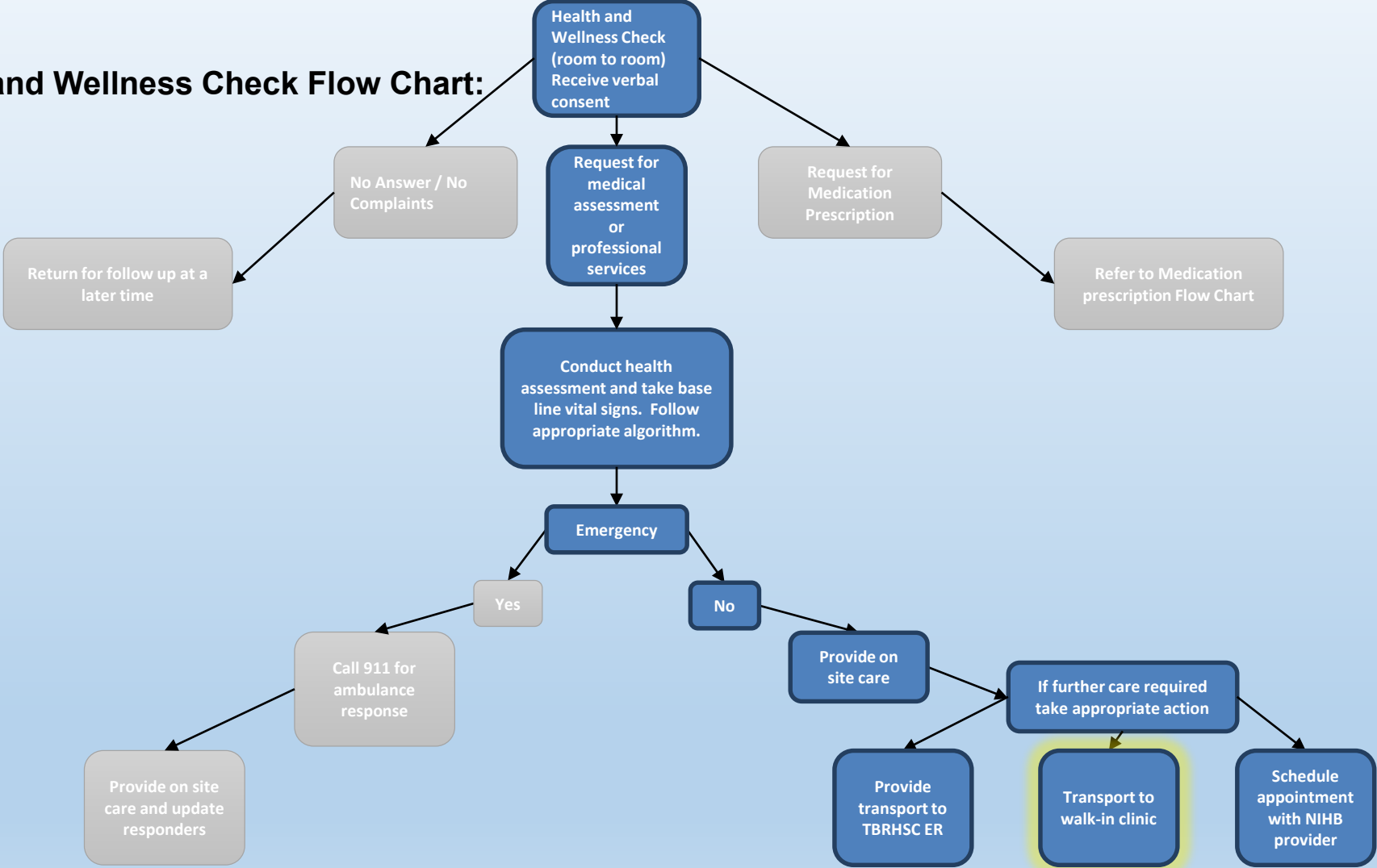




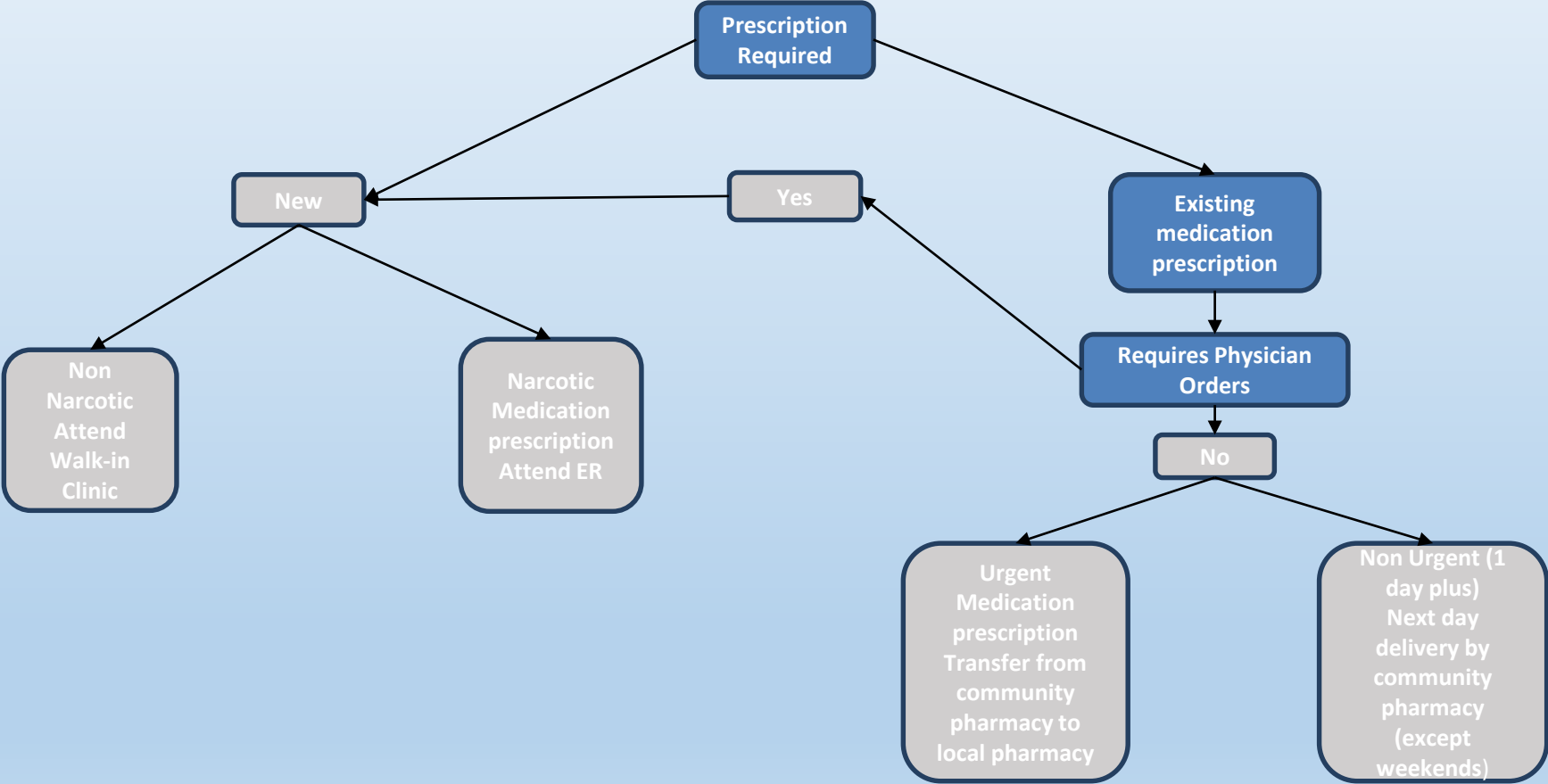
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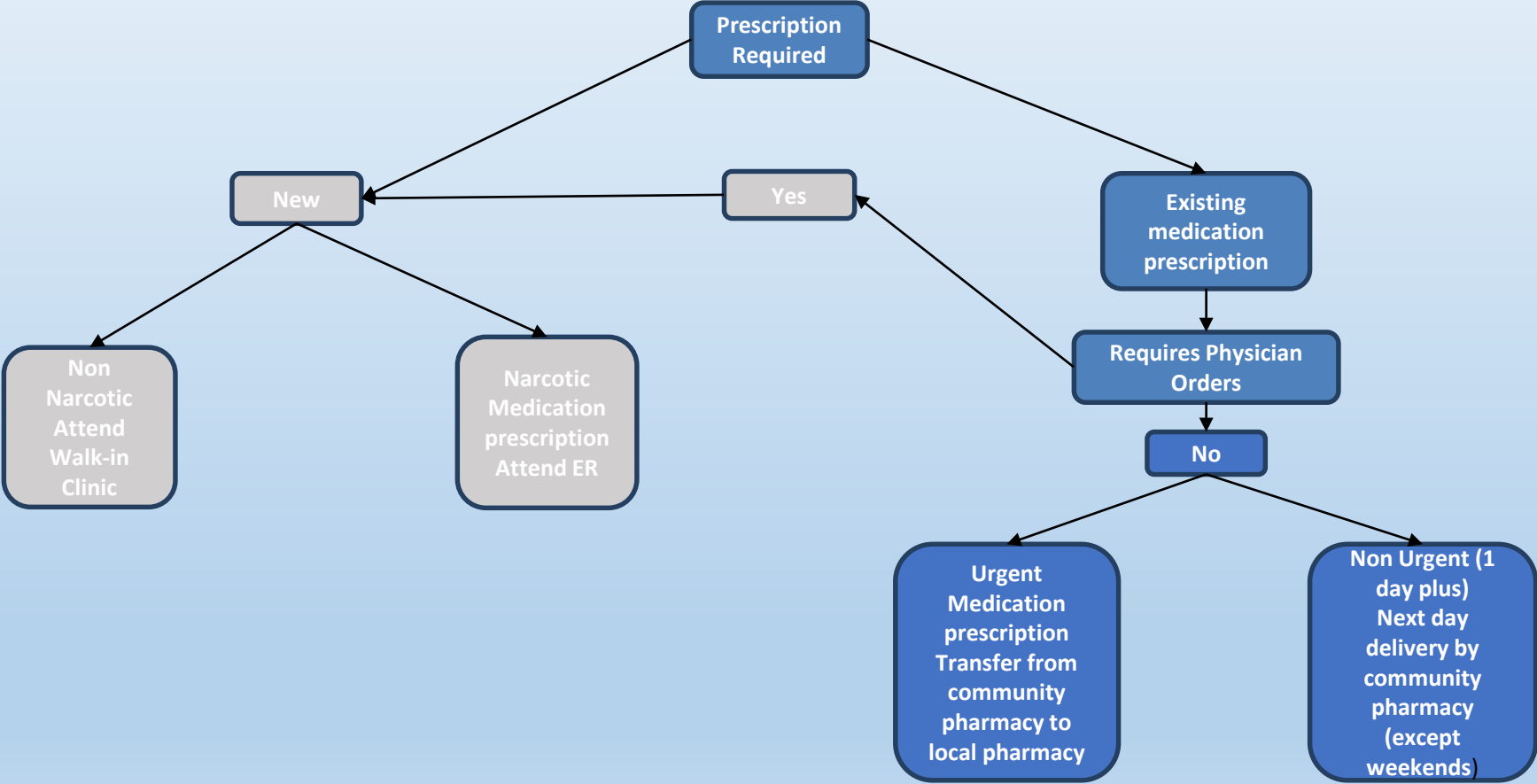
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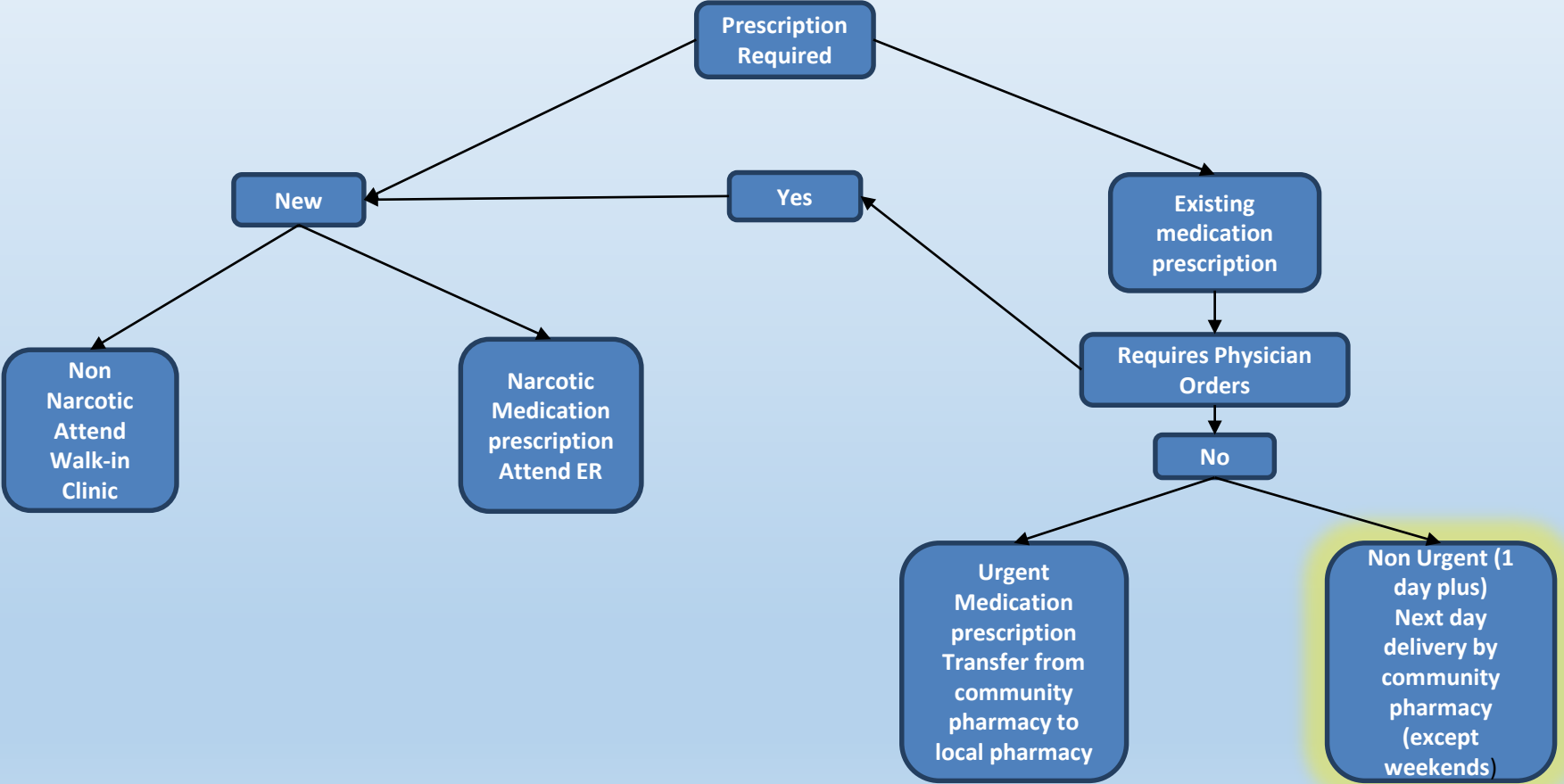
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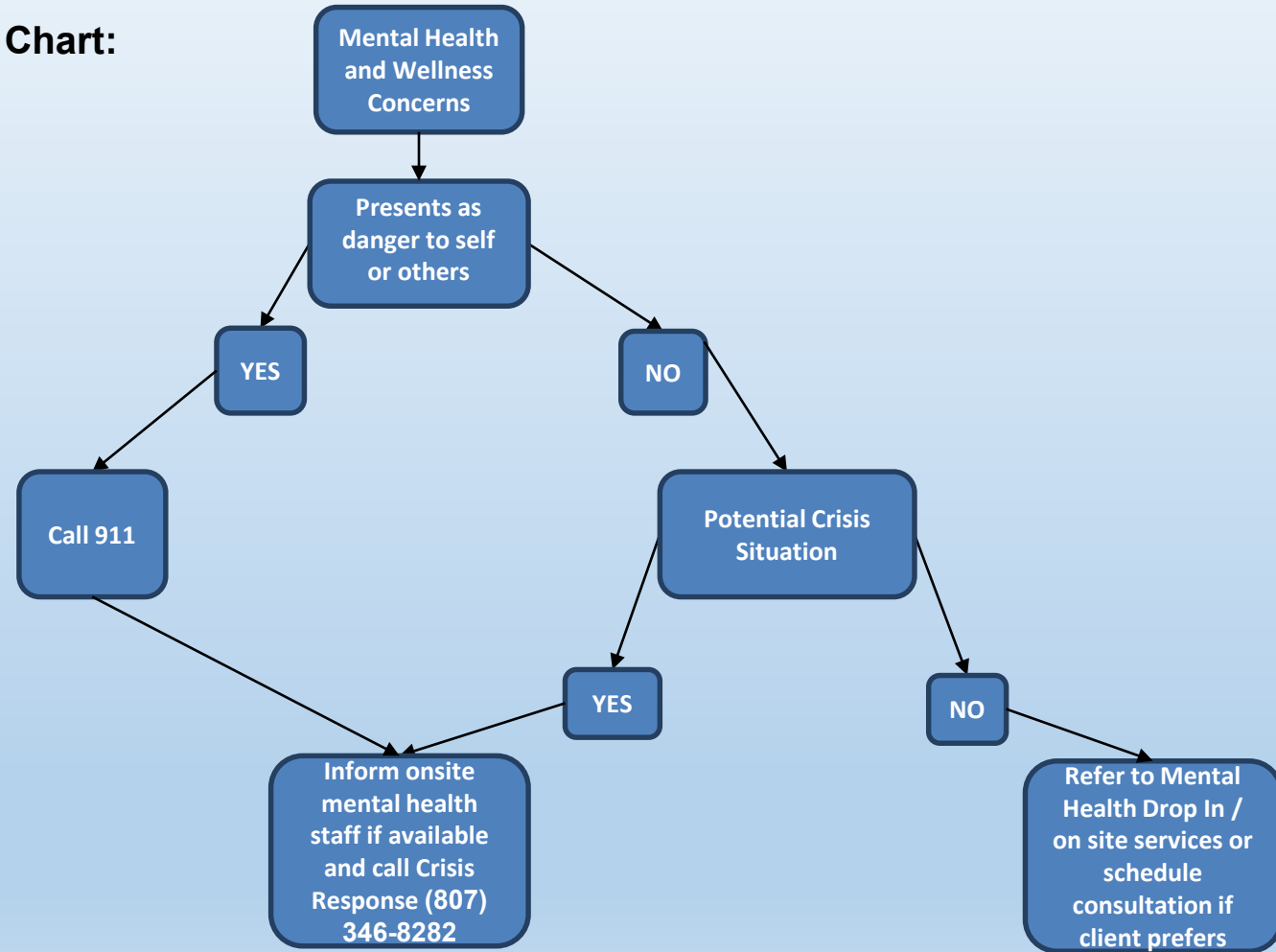


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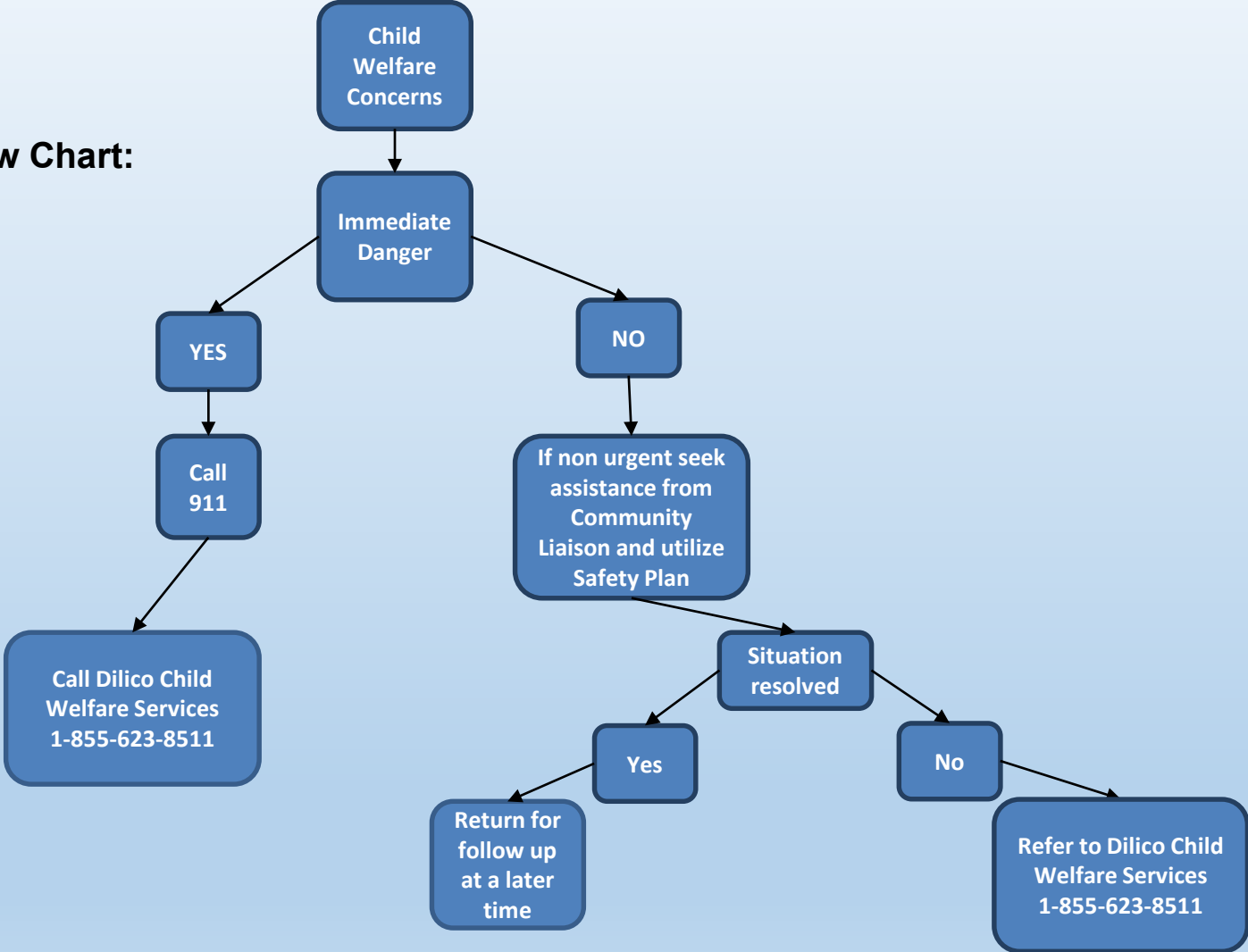




## Mental Health Flow Chart:



**Child Welfare Flow Chart:**



# Results Post Implementation of Community Paramedicine Evacuation Initiatives

Total calls for service= 140

Calls while Community Paramedicine on site= 21 total

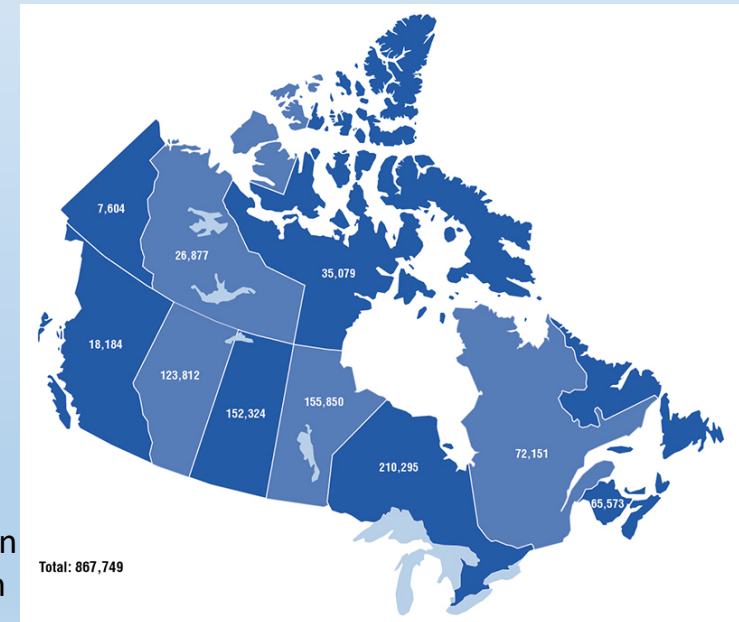
9 refusal of service

12 transport to ED

85% reduction in service calls and ambulance transports ER while CP on site



population values based on region of band registration



# Areas for Potential Development

**Gather more feedback from First Nation partners**



- Up to date medical records or transfer of EMR (Electronic Medical Records) from evacuated communities.
- Dietary needs: A high number of diabetic patients were noted amongst the evacuated community.
- Consent for medical care upon registration
- Education and training for evacuated community members to facilitate city safety and navigation

# Cultural Education for Staff

Members of the staff helping with the evacuation have displayed interest in providing city employees (particularly those associated with the evacuation and emergency services) with cultural training.

Language training may be beneficial for individuals working closely with First Nation communities. Many individuals from the evacuated community spoke no English or French and difficulty communicating with staff members. Learning basic words to facilitate communication could improve service and reduce evacuee's angst.







# Thank You to our Community Partners



Anishinabek Family Care



Nishnawbe Aski Nation  
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Thank You

