

Disposition of NL Health Line Callers

Objective

To determine the disposition of people who contacted NL Health Line during 2018–19 and 2019–20.

Practice Points

1. The NL Health Line was established to provide people access to advice concerning a medical problem by calling 811. Clinical algorithms are used to establish acuity. Calls are answered by agents but calls are elevated to registered nurses who are available 24/7 should the call require this professional support.
2. Disposition included ambulance dispatch, refer to emergency with triage directed, refer to family doctor, refer to other health care professional, self-care at home, or poison information with triage.

Data

Data were obtained from the Department of Health and Community Services who received the data from the NL Health Line. From 1 Mar 2018 to 28 Feb 2019 there were 43,196 calls and in the same period of 2019–20 there were 49,430.

Results

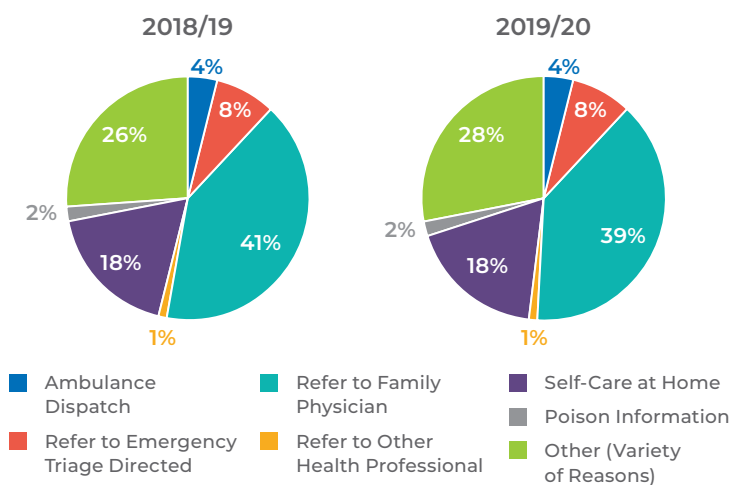


Figure 1. The Disposition of People Who Contacted NL Health Line in 2018–19 and 2019–20

- In both years, 12% were dispatched by ambulance or referred to the emergency room, and about 40% were referred to their family physician.

Table 1. The Number of People Who Called the NL Health Line Analyzed by Disposition

Disposition	2018/19	2019/20	Difference	% Difference
Ambulance	1,593	1,900	307	19.3
Emergency	3,553	3,785	232	6.5
Family Physician	17,899	19,189	1,290	7.2
Other Health Professionals	432	376	-56	-13.0
Self-Care at Home	7,610	9,030	1,420	18.7
Poison Information	800	951	151	18.9
Other (Variety of Reasons)	11,309	14,199	2,890	25.6
Total	43,196	49,430	6,234	14.4

- Comparing the number of calls made to the NL Health Line in 2019–20 to the previous year, there was a 14.4% increase. Almost half of this increase (2,890 of 6,234 = 46%) was for reasons which were classified as other (variety of reasons), but specific categories also had notable increases, including a 19.3% increase in those who required dispatch of an ambulance, an 18.7% increase in those who were recommended self-care at home, and an 18.9% increase in those who were provided poison information.

Conclusions

1. 12% of those who called NL Health Line went or were advised to go to the emergency room, and 40% were referred to their family physician. However, 18% were advised they required no further engagement with other health services at the time and to continue self-care at home.
2. The increase in calls in 2019–20 was, to a major extent, for other (variety of reasons), as well as people who were directed to their family physician or were advised that self-care at home was sufficient. There was also a relative increase in those who required an ambulance or poison information, but these did not contribute as much to the overall increase in calls.