



Why we did this audit

The Ottawa Paramedic Service (the Service) provides patient care and emergency medical coverage to more than one million residents of Ottawa. Within the Service, Primary Care Paramedics, Advanced Care Paramedics and Superintendents are responsible for providing these services. Advanced Care Paramedics are also trained to administer controlled substances and provide advanced medical procedures to patients.

The Superintendents play a critical leadership role as they provide coaching, support, and mentorship to over 500 Paramedics in the field.

As the Service is subject to external oversight bodies with mandates for periodic audits and reviews, it was determined that the scope of this audit would focus primarily on in-field support and oversight provided by Superintendents to Paramedics, as well as the management of controlled substances.

What we found

Our audit noted that there are many controls in place surrounding the management of controlled substances. However, a lack of controls specifically around the administration, inventory management, and access to controlled substances was noted.

Our audit also noted that Superintendents are generally well equipped with tools and training to support Paramedics. Peer Support is one of the key tools available to Superintendents to support Paramedics, however, it was observed that there was a lack of transparency and communication regarding upcoming changes to this program.

This has resulted in uncertainty amongst Paramedics and Superintendents. Further, inconsistencies in onboarding new Paramedics, specifically around duration of oversight and mentorship has led to an increased workload for Superintendents.

Finally, our audit noted that Paramedics are not reporting all incidents of experienced workplace violence from members of the public, bringing to light opportunities to clarify and strengthen the associated processes.

We made four recommendations to ensure that:

- Sufficient controls are in place to mitigate risks associated with controlled substances to a level that is aligned with management's risk tolerance;
- Upcoming changes to support programs are communicated to members of the Service in a timely and fulsome manner;
- New Paramedics are receiving appropriate training and oversight during their first months on the road; and
- There are clear expectations for Paramedics related to reporting instances of violence, including a formal commitment from leadership about actions staff should expect once an incident is reported.