



# TOWARD HEALTH EQUITY: PRACTICAL ACTIONS FOR PUBLIC HEALTH INSPECTORS

Framework for action on the social determinants of health and health equity

## USER GUIDE

Public health inspectors (PHIs) and environmental health officers (EHOs) have a role to play when it comes to addressing the social determinants of health (SDH) and working toward health equity. This framework is intended for use by environmental public health field staff (i.e., EHOs and PHIs), as well as other public health agencies or departments that deal with environmental health issues.

**The purpose of this framework is to stimulate thinking about how health equity and the social determinants of health relate to practice.**

This framework was developed from feedback received from practitioners at all levels of environmental public health practice. It has been revised based on pilot testing and further feedback on usability.

**Through a series of questions, this framework will help practitioners:**

- Apply the broader concepts of SDH and health equity to their practice
- Understand how health equity work fits into their own region or organization
- Work with others to support health equity

**This framework is intended for three main audiences,** who can use the tool in a number of ways depending on the scope and responsibilities of their position.

## 1 Frontline PHIs and EHOs can use the framework to:

- Guide self-reflection, ideally followed by group discussion, on how the SDH and health equity intersect with environmental public health practice
- Recognize operators as members of the same public you are working to protect and serve
- Start a conversation about how your workplace could address the SDH and health equity through day-to-day work activities
- Identify ways to be involved in your community to learn about which SDH have the greatest influence on health status and health equity patterns
- Plan continuing education activities to build knowledge of the SDH and health equity
- Contribute knowledge and practice stories of your own to support your colleagues
- Support training and mentoring for new and existing staff as well as student placements
- Consider how the concepts of the SDH and health equity can be addressed within the mandate of your regulated profession
- Recognise partnership opportunities within your agency as well as with organizations in the community
- Consider how your own experiences with disadvantage or privilege influence the way you approach inspection scenarios, and how your position of authority as a PHI influences how clients perceive you

## 2 Managers & directors can use the framework to:

- Incorporate skills and knowledge into job descriptions and training so that staff are competent in the areas of SDH and health equity
- Have purposeful and regular discussions at team meetings about the SDH, health equity, and how these concepts intersect with environmental public health practice
- Incorporate self-reflection activities around the SDH and health equity into individuals' work plans
- Frame the concepts of SDH and health equity with examples from various areas of practice (e.g., food premises inspection, built environment, air quality, housing, environmental exposures, personal services)
- Integrate the concepts of SDH and health equity into program plans, inspection quotas, organizational strategies, and divisional reports
- Designate environmental health staff as “field ambassadors” for SDH and health equity, and identify staff from other divisions as go-to resources for EHOs/PHIs
- Incorporate knowledge and skills around the SDH and health equity into performance appraisals and quality improvement initiatives
- Coordinate opportunities for collaboration with different public health professionals, such as dietitians, social workers, health promoters, and dental hygienists

## 3 Educational & professional development organizations (e.g., degree-granting programs and the Canadian Institute for Public Health Inspectors (CIPHI)) can use the framework to:

- Consider how to integrate SDH and health equity into course curriculum requirements
- Develop practicum experiences with public health staff who have a focus on SDH and health equity as a way to promote cross-sectoral collaboration
- Develop questions for Board of Certification (BOC) exams related to SDH and health equity
- Integrate the concepts of SDH and health equity into competencies for environmental health practice
- Create resources and opportunities for EHOs/PHIs to access knowledge on SDH and health equity, e.g., webinars, provincial/regional meetings with an equity focus, conference themes related to SDH and health equity, incorporating an equity lens into all training events

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