

NURTURING A CULTURE OF EQUITY

Goals and approaches for a common agenda for public health action

The Common Agenda for public health action identifies eight priorities to improve health equity in Canada. These approaches are organized under three main themes – build a foundation for action, establish a strong knowledge base, and collaborate with non-health sector partners¹ – and complement the four roles for public health action on health equity.² They echo the three overarching recommendations of the World Health Organization Commission on the Social Determinants of Health to: improve daily living conditions; tackle the inequitable distribution of power, money, and resources; understand the problem and assess the impact of action.³

This resource is for public health practitioners, decision-makers and organizations.

Use this to take action to influence the social determinants of health (SDH) and improve health equity.



BUILD A FOUNDATION FOR ACTION

- 1 *Strengthen public health leadership commitments and related action.*

Leadership is a cornerstone for public health action on health equity. Where supportive leadership is present, activities are more likely to be initiated and supported.

- 2 *Increase public support and political will to invest in policies to improve the SDH and health equity.*

Political will is a driver for investments across health and non-health systems for the implementation of wide ranging public policy to improve equity.

- 3 *Build the capacity of public health organizations and systems to act on the SDH and improve health equity.*

The ability for public health organizations and systems to adequately act on health inequities is related to the capacity within these structures to identify the problem and mobilize and reorient resources upstream to address them.



ESTABLISH AND USE A STRONG KNOWLEDGE BASE

- 4 *Act on existing evidence and strengthen the knowledge base to support concerted action.*

Implement existing knowledge and evidence with an emphasis on interventions that address the root causes of health inequities, and develop robust evaluation systems that are sensitive to equity issues.

- 5 *Incorporate equity measures into regular monitoring, surveillance, and reporting.*

Consistent high quality population data allows an assessment of trends and progress towards improving health equity. This assessment includes information on health inequities, the determinants of these inequities and action and strategies to address them.



COLLABORATE WITH NON-HEALTH SECTOR PARTNERS

- 6 *Participate in long-term multisectoral action to develop policies across health and non-health sectors.*

Given the interrelated and dynamic nature of the SDH, no one sector (government or non-governmental) can make a significant impact in redressing inequities on its own. Actions that catalyse and amplify the actions of others can shift the distribution of health generating assets, wealth, power and resources.

- 7 *Allocate time and resources for community engagement and political empowerment.*

The communities most affected by inequities are those with the least access to power and resources. Meaningful and sustained engagement of communities in decisions and actions ensures that these voices and experiences are centered in the conversation on improving health equity.

- 8 *Advocate for policy and structural change to improve upstream determinants of health.*

Public health is well positioned to frame issues, propose policies, and understand political barriers and enablers to change.

WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health overarching recommendations

1

Improve the conditions of daily life – the circumstances in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age.

2

Tackle the inequitable distribution of power, money, and resources, and measure the structural drivers of those conditions of daily life – globally, nationally, and locally.

3

Understand the problem and assess the impact of action – expand the knowledge base, develop a workforce that is trained in the social determinants of health, and raise public awareness about the social determinants of health.



PUBLIC HEALTH ROLES

ASSESS AND REPORT

Assess and report on a) the existence and impact of health inequities, and b) effective strategies to reduce these inequities.

MODIFY AND ORIENT INTERVENTIONS

Modify and orient interventions and services to reduce inequities, with an understanding of the unique needs of populations that experience marginalization.

PARTNER WITH OTHER SECTORS

Partner with other government and community organizations to identify ways to improve health outcomes for populations that experience marginalization.

PARTICIPATE IN POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Lead, support and participate with other organizations in policy analysis and development, and in advocacy for improvement in health determinants and inequities.

Download the full report, Common Agenda for Public Health Action on Health Equity at www.nccdh.ca



National Collaborating Centre
for Determinants of Health
Centre de collaboration nationale
des déterminants de la santé

NATIONAL COLLABORATING CENTRE FOR DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH

St. Francis Xavier University
Antigonish, NS B2G 2W5
tel: (902) 867-5406 fax: (902) 867-6130
nccdh@stfx.ca www.nccdh.ca
Twitter: @NCCDH_CCNDS

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