



Toward health equity: Practical actions for public health inspectors

Draft framework for action on the social determinants of health and health equity

Public health inspectors (PHIs) and environmental health officers (EHOs) have a role to play when it comes to addressing the social determinants of health and working toward health equity. Ask yourself the following questions to determine what you can do.

This draft framework was developed based on discussions with PHIs and EHOs. It was first presented for discussion at the CIPHI Manitoba Branch Continuing Professional Competencies Fall Workshop in Winnipeg, Manitoba on October 8, 2015.

We want to hear from you: NCCEH and NCCDH are working in collaboration with the BC Centre for Disease Control to further develop this framework based on input from environmental public health practitioners. **We will collect feedback until December 21, 2015.**

Please provide any specific comments or feedback in the fillable boxes after each numbered section.

- **Are these questions clear? Do they relate to your practice?**
- **How would you change these questions? What additional questions do you recommend?**

Is a tool like this helpful for you to consider how to address the social determinants of health and health equity? **You can provide general feedback about the utility of this framework here:**

You can save this fillable PDF and add more comments at a later time (click File → Save as).

Click the **Send** button at the end of this document to send your feedback by email.



1. Learn more about health equity and the social determinants of health.

- Key terms: health equity, health inequities, health inequalities, social determinants of health, disparities, vulnerable & marginalized populations, upstream/downstream
- Review the NCCDH *Glossary of Essential Health Terms* <http://nccdh.ca/resources/glossary/>

2. Reflect on your practice to identify where equity and social determinants of health impact—or are impacted by—your work.

- As yourself some guiding questions for each area of practice you work in.
 - Could any of the following factors have an effect on your relationship with the operator/client, or their understanding of what needs to be done: culture, education, literacy, language, geographic location (urban, rural, isolated community)?
 - What additional barriers might operators/clients be facing that would impact their ability to comply with regulations and guidelines? (e.g., personal or business income, individual/family stress, housing conditions, transportation issues, employment conditions, personal health)
 - How could your interactions with clients unintentionally aggravate existing barriers?
 - How could your interactions with clients help alleviate the effects of existing barriers?

3. Find out who can support your understanding of health equity.

- Know who your key contacts are that can support your work.
 - Who can you talk to you to for information, resources, etc.?
 - Is there a lead or “point person” for determinants of health/health equity work in your agency? Do you know who this person is?
 - Are there cross-discipline or cross-program opportunities to link with other practitioners?
 - What can you learn from other professions within or outside public health (e.g., nurses, dietitians, social workers, licensing officers, building inspectors, etc.)? Can you use some of these approaches in your own practice?
 - What professional development opportunities are available to you? What would be useful?



4. Identify barriers that prevent you from taking action.

- Identify situations in which you feel frustrated or “stuck” in terms of responding in a manner that you feel is helpful.
 - What prevents you from responding in the way you would like (i.e., lack of resources, lack of authority, lack of information, lack of support, etc.)?
 - How would you like to see these situations play out? What can you do to get this result?

5. Determine actions you can take right now.

- Start with the low hanging fruit.
 - What is one tangible thing you can address?
 - What can you change in your own thinking or approach?
 - What resources exist elsewhere that you can borrow?
 - Where can you suggest alternative approaches for operators or clients facing barriers?
 - How can you advocate for people most in need?
 - Who can you contact within your current referral network?

6. Engage your colleagues.

- Find out what is being done by PHIs or EHOs in your region/other regions/other provinces.
 - How can you share the success stories of others?
 - Can you use these approaches in your own practice?
- Consider what you need from those you work with.
 - What do you need from your direct supervisor/manager? From regional or health unit leadership? From the provincial government?
 - What opportunities exist to integrate health equity considerations into organizational mandates and individual work plans?
 - Can you share ideas and examples with colleagues or supervisors to encourage use or adaptation in your region?



7. Consider collaborations outside your own department.

- Think about things that need to be tackled by others and how you can support that.
 - What can agencies or divisions outside Health Protection or Environmental Health do?
 - What can degree training programs do?
 - How can your agency provide placement opportunities for student PHIs that explore social determinants of health, health equity, and cross-discipline collaboration?
 - What can CIPHI do?

8. Self-check:

- Set some personal goals with a reasonable timeline (e.g., read the NCCEH/NCCDH Pilot Study report and the Glossary of Health Equity Terms; integrate one small action into your practice; share an idea with your manager or director).
- Create a calendar or email reminder to revisit your goals in 3, 6, or 12 months.

SEND

Clicking “send” will attach the completed form to an email addressed to
karen.rideout@bccdc.ca

*Are you working on these issues in your own practice or in your region?
Share your stories so that we can learn from you and pass it on to others.
Let us know what the NCCs can do to help.*

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