

# Population Health in Action Workbook



This document was created by the Tri-District Population Health Committee  
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## Population Health In Action

**What is Population Health and why is it important to health?** The goal of a population health approach is to maintain and improve the health status of the entire population and to reduce inequities in health status between groups and /or sub groups. It recognizes that health is a capacity or resource rather than a state. This broader notion of health recognizes the range of social, economic and physical environmental factors that contribute to health.

**What is Health Promotion and why is it important to health?** Health promotion is supporting people to achieve health, and creating the supportive environment for health to be obtained. Health promotion has long been recognized as a way of taking action on the social, physical, economic and political factors that affect health. When making decisions about policies, programs and services all the guiding principles of population health and health promotion must be considered.

The **Population Health in Action Workbook** will assist in thinking through a population health approach in your work, and will allow you to be more effective in achieving health outcomes. The workbook....

- ❖ is meant to be a flexible tool- not a test
- ❖ includes a list of questions to assist in your reflections about your work
  - it is meant to give you prompts and cues
  - not all questions have to be answered, but all have value
- ❖ includes a list of resources and stories that can be used as examples to assist your thinking about population health
- ❖ can be used individually or as a group
- ❖ can be used to assess an existing program or policy, or used to help design a new initiative

Population Health is a different way of working. Please read through the workbook; you may find it challenging at first, though the process is worthwhile. As you complete the Workbook, you may identify issues that require further direction or support. If you need support or have any questions please contact your local Public Health office, or the Prevention/Health Promotion Coordinator with Addiction Services.



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## Population Health Guiding Principles

Think 'big picture'-the broad socio-economic environment influencing health outcomes and lifestyle choices

- *How have you considered the broad picture to get at the roots of the problem?*
- *What are the expected outcomes and how do they reflect a broad understanding of health?*
- *What can you do to enhance your work in this area?*
- *What additional supports are required?*
- *How can these resources /supports be obtained?*



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## How do we think 'big picture'?

**Think health determinants-the broad range of factors that affect individual and population health. These determinants are:**

income and social status, social support networks, education, employment and working conditions, physical environments, social environments, biology and genetic endowment, personal health practices and coping skills, healthy child development, health services, gender, and culture.

- *Ask yourself what determinant(s) of health is impacted and why do these things happen?*
- *What are the factors that influence the determinants?*
- *How does the proposed program/policy address underlying causes?*
- *What can you do to enhance your work in this area?*
- *What additional supports are required?*
- *How can these resources /supports be obtained?*



## Striving for equity in Health

- *Ask yourself how your program removes barriers (such as child care, transportation, income) that make it harder for some people to be healthier than it is for others?*
- *What supports have you put in place to allow for the achievement of health?*
- *What can you do to enhance your work in this area?*
- *What additional supports are required?*
- *How can these resources /supports be obtained?*



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## Forming new strategic partnerships

- *Ask yourself how you are working co-operatively with other sectors for support and greater effectiveness?*
- *How are you involved with groups, agencies and organizations you haven't worked with before but who have a stake in addressing the root of the issue?*
- *What can you do to enhance your work in this area?*
- *What additional supports are required?*
- *How can these resources /supports be obtained?*



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## Think multi-strategies (Examples of strategies are those stated in the Ottawa Charter)

- ❖ Building healthy public policy
  - ❖ Creating supportive environments (physical, social, political)
  - ❖ Strengthening community action by
    - Developing needed skills
    - Helping people learn how to access resources
    - Putting in place supportive policies and services in the community
    - Developing strong social networks
    - Helping people evaluate and learn from their efforts
  - ❖ Developing personal skills
  - ❖ Reorientating health services (reallocating resources to health promotion and disease prevention)
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- *Ask yourself if the approach taken is based on several strategies?*
  - *How will different strategies be used for different groups for different places for different circumstances?*
  - *What can you do to enhance your work in this area?*
  - *What additional supports are required?*
  - *How can these resources /supports be obtained?*



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## Think about evidence-data, epidemiological, clinical and experimental research, and community stories

- *Ask yourself what evidence do you have and use to justify the strategies selected*
- *Is the evidence valid, reliable, and relevant?*
- *Can the evidence be applied to this situation and this community?*
- *What documentation is being kept about the strategies used to add to the evidence base?*
- *How is quantitative as well as qualitative evidence being considered?*
- *Think about what evidence is missing; what additional evidence is required and how can it be obtained?*
- *What can you do to enhance your work in this area?*
- *What additional supports are required?*
- *How can these resources /supports be obtained?*





## Think about evaluation

- *What documentation do you intend to collect?*
- *How can you tell if what you are doing is what you intended?*
- *How are you determining if the proposed program/policy is effective?*
- *What can you do to enhance your work in this area?*
- *What additional supports are required?*
- *How can these resources/supports be obtained?*



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## Think about empowering practice and community participation in decision-making

- *Ask yourself how community people are involved in the program/policy development?*
- *How do the people have a genuine say in how things are done?*
- *How are access and participation encouraged?*
- *How does the strategy help people gain greater control over decisions and actions that affect their health?*
- *What can you do to enhance your work in this area?*
- *What additional supports are required?*
- *How can these resources /supports be obtained?*



## Think capacity building

- *How will actions taken allow people to assume personal responsibility and support working together on community action?*
- *How does your strategy provide a mechanism for people to come together to discuss and take action on issues that affect them?*
- *How will communities be supported to take actions to support health enhancing practices and measures?*
- *What can you do to enhance your work in this area?*
- *What additional supports are required?*
- *How can these resources /supports be obtained?*



## Think multi-sectors

- *Ask yourself if the right people are involved in the strategy to address the underlying causes of the issue/ how does your strategy encourage a diverse group of partners to get involved?*
- *Which organizations have a mandate and /or responsibility to address the health issue?*
- *How are responsibilities shared and distributed amongst the team members?*
- *What are the main ways that the team members work together to achieve outcomes?*
- *What can you do to enhance your work in this area?*
- *What additional supports are required?*
- *How can these resources /supports be obtained?*



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## Final Thoughts

On completing this tool, reflect on the significance of using a population health approach. What are the advantages to health outcomes? What would be the consequences of not considering the principles of population health in your work?

As you review your responses to the questions, consider the area(s) where you would like to enhance your population health knowledge and practice. What are the steps you need to take to make this happen?

What might be some of the barriers to using a population health approach? How can these be overcome?

How do you plan to measure and evaluate your success in implementing a population health approach in this situation?



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## To Move the Issue Forward

What types of advocacy action are required on this issue?

What can you do to move this issue forward?



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*All of these resources are useful in gaining an understanding of Population Health. If you have time to review only one, the article A population health approach: Definitions and guiding principles is suggested. Copies are available from Public Health or Addiction Services offices.*

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