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**Integrating Equity into Public Health
Practice**



Presenters

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Definitions

- *Health Disparity*: differences in disease prevalence, outcomes or access to care
- *Health Inequality*: differences in health that can be ranked
- *Health Inequity*: systematic differences in health or (major social determinants of health) between groups with different levels of social advantage (wealth, power, or prestige)

Background

- Socioeconomic status determines opportunities and environments-- affecting our ability to practice healthy behaviors. This gap results in dramatic health inequities.
- Most interventions focus on health care access and quality. How can public health address root causes more directly?
- In the Washington State DOH, Community Wellness & Prevention (CWP), implemented a 3-step process to answer this question.



History

- 2003: Chronic disease programs within CWP review key concepts on Social Determinants of Health from the *Community Guide to Preventive Services*.
- 2006: CWP's Diabetes program issues a report on root causes & potential solutions to Washington diabetes disparities.
- 2006: Ingham County's story in NACCHO's *Tackling Health Inequities* inspires CWP staff to begin planning a similar effort in Washington.
- 2007: Chronic disease programs within CWP conduct an assessment of their readiness to embrace health equity work.



Objectives

In late 2006, planners met with program managers to gain their support for a cross-program initiative to:

- Learn together about root causes driving health inequities
- Generate ideas on how public health professionals can address the social determinants of health
- Create an action plan to address health inequities in a more upstream fashion.

Led by our CWP director, managers gave their full support and contributed towards the cost of the project (approximately \$10,000).

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Process

- *Education*

Four half-day sessions covering key concepts linking social and economic determinants to health disparities, and a review of potential interventions

- *Brainstorming*

One half-day exploration of ideas on how to change in our public health practice

- *Action Planning*

One half-day planning session, using the Institute for Cultural Affairs ToP® model, to determine what we need to do to implement the changes we identify.

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Educational Session 1

Dennis Raphael: *Policies to address Disparities in Health*

Objective Understand policy approaches to address social determinants of health, and the leadership that is required.

Concepts

- How socioeconomic & political factors drive inequalities
- Social policies that can impact health inequities
- Canadian experience with policy implementation to address social determinants of health



Educational Session 2

Stephen Bezruchka: *Differences in Exposure & Vulnerability*

Objective Understand how social hierarchy is manifested as income inequality. Understand how social position shapes exposure to health risks and health protective factors.

Concepts

- How social hierarchy shapes access to health-promoting resources within society and increases exposure to health damaging stressors
- Ways DOH staff can get the public involved in reducing or eliminating health inequities

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Educational Session 3

Leticia Nieto: *Structural Causes of Social Stratification*

Objective Understand, cognitively and emotionally, implications of social rank & status; gain insight into the chronic stress associated with lower socioeconomic position.

Concepts

- Hierarchical power structures (agent/ target dynamics)
- Priorities and perspectives of various social classes

Educational Session 4

Bobbie Berkowitz & Corliss McKeever: *Evidence based practice & practice based evidence*

Objective Understand and value community wisdom as well as scientific evidence on the efficacy of various interventions.

Concepts

- Participatory approach to engage communities in efforts to reduce health disparities
- Current evidence on effectiveness of approaches

CWP Brainstorming



- Staff participated in a half-day facilitated session to discuss how they might translate their new understandings into public health practice.
- A total of thirty-six concrete activities were identified, grouped into seven major categories of work

Action Planning

7 Avenues for Change:

- Seek out Collaboration internally
- Coordinate with Agency Leadership
- Workforce Development
- New Partnerships
- Innovative Interventions
- Communication Plan
- Assessment & Evaluation





Lessons Learned

- Carefully frame the issue
- Identify internal champions
- Be attentive to time commitment
- Attitude is everything



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