

Public Health and the HNHB LHIN

Objectives in working together

- To use population and public health principles, methodologies and expertise to support regional and local health system planning
- To improve population health outcomes

Developing common definitions

Through previous conversations, it has been noted that the terms “population health”, “population health assessment”, “population health approach”, and “health equity” may be used to mean different things. Developing common definitions and a shared pool of meaning is foundational to public health and the LHIN working effectively together and achieving common goals. Public Health Units and the HNHB LHIN agreed to use the following definitions.

Population Health

Often people use “population health” and it’s unclear whether they mean population health assessment (i.e. the measurement of health status, health status indicators) or population health intervention/approach (i.e. the strategies used to improve the health status of a population).

- **Population health:** Population health is the health of the population, measured by health status indicators. Population health is influenced by physical, biological, behavioural, social, cultural, economic, and other factors. The term is also used to refer to the prevailing health level of the population, or a specified subset of the population, or the level to which the population aspires. Population health describes the state of health, and public health is the range of practices, procedures, methods, institutions, and disciplines required to achieve it. The term also is used to describe the academic disciplines involved in studies of determinants and dynamics of health status of the population.

Last, John. A dictionary of public health. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 2007.

- **Population health assessment:** As one of the core functions of public health, assessment involves the systematic collection and analysis of data in order to provide a basis for decision-making. This may include collecting statistics on local health status, health needs, and/or other public health issues.

Institute of Medicine Committee for the Study of the Future of Public Health. The future of public health. Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1988.

- **Population health approach:** As an approach, population health focuses on the interrelated conditions and factors that influence the health of populations over the life course, identifies systematic variations in their patterns of occurrence, and applies the resulting knowledge to develop and implement policies and actions to improve the health and well-being of those populations. A population health approach addresses the entire range of individual and collective factors that determine health. Population health strategies are designed to affect whole groups or populations of people. The overarching goals of a population health approach are to maintain and improve the health status of the entire population and to reduce inequities in health status between population groups.

Health Canada. (2001). Population health template: key elements and actions that define a population health approach: July 2001 draft. Ottawa, ON.

<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ph-sp/approach-approche/index-eng.php>

Health Equity

- **What is health inequality versus inequity?** Inequality and inequity are two words that look very similar and sometimes get confused with being the same thing, but they, in fact, have very different meanings. • Health inequality means there are differences in health experiences or outcomes between different populations. • Health inequity is an inequality that is an unfair, avoidable, systematic disadvantage.
- **What is the difference between health equity and health care equity?** • Health equity is the ideal state in which all people are able to reach their full health potential and receive high-quality care that is fair and appropriate from each person's perspective, no matter where they live, who they are or what they have. • Health care equity is the aspect of health equity that focuses on the health system's ability to provide equitable health care services.

The above definitions are directly from Health Quality Ontario (HQO) Health Equity report:

Income and Health Opportunities to achieve health equity in Ontario. Health Quality Ontario, 2016. <http://www.hqontario.ca/System-Performance/Specialized-Reports/Health-Equity-Report>

While public health supports HQO's definition of health equity, we also advocate a holistic approach in assessment and implementation that considers not only equity in access and experience, but also strives to achieve equity in health outcomes and health by addressing the social determinants of health.

Structure for ongoing collaboration between Public Health Units and the HNHB LHIN

A Steering Committee for Collaboration has been formed to support ongoing work with the LHIN. The Steering Committee, made up of Medical Officers of Health and HNHB LHIN Leadership will:

- Determine strategy, objectives and outcomes for collaborative efforts
- Develop and approve the common PHU/LHIN work plan
- Identify resources to support/implement the strategy and work plan
- Identify other structural supports (e.g., working groups) and partners needed to achieve objectives and outcomes