Health in All Policies National Action Plan

> Within countries there are dramatic differences in health that are closely linked with degrees of social disadvantage. Differences of this magnitude, within and between countries, simply should never happen. These inequities in health, avoidable health inequalities, arise because of the circumstances in which people grow, live, work, and age, and the systems put in place to deal with illness.
>
> — World Health Organization

1. Health in All Policies: An overview

What it is

In essence, Health in All Policies is a way for governments and other agencies to more efficiently, effectively and equitably improve people's health by seeing health issues through a wider lens.

Why it makes sense

Policy decisions from every government department can have disastrous health (and economic) consequences later on, even when these decisions make perfect fiscal sense and promise to achieve worthy objectives. We can see such unimagined consequences when we look at the decision to drop compulsory physical education from our schools or close mental-health institutions. How much have these decisions cost us in terms of our health and our health-care resources?

Consider these costs in Canada when broad sectors of public policy and legislation — in education, transportation (including highways and roads), the environment, communications, natural resources, income security, foreign trade and others — are developed with little or no attention to health.

By taking health impacts into account, a Health in All Policies approach would improve our population's health and well-being. And better health promotes economic growth, productivity and prosperity, helps children do well in school, and allows citizens to be

more productive and engaged in their communities. As well, a healthy population requires less government support for social services and health care.[1]

Improving our health as a population is also why a Health in All Policies approach helps us sustain a high-quality health-care system. Canada's doctors and nurses agree that "Coordinated investments in health promotion and disease prevention, including attention to the role of the social determinants of health, are critical to the health and wellness of Canadians and to the viability of the health care system" (p. 2).[2]

How to implement it

Governments can best support the implementation of a Health in All Policies approach when

- "a clear mandate makes joined-up government an imperative;

- systematic processes take account of interactions across sectors;

- mediation occurs across interests;

- accountability, transparency and participatory processes are present;

- engagement occurs with stakeholders outside of government; [and]

- practical cross-sector initiatives build partnerships and trust" (p. 2).[3]

The following tools and instruments can be useful to help implement a Health in All Policies approach:

- "inter-ministerial and inter-departmental committees

- cross-sector action teams

- integrated budgets and accounting

- cross-cutting information and evaluation systems

- joined-up workforce development

- community consultations and Citizens' Juries[4]

- Partnership platforms

- Health Lens Analysis[5]

- Impact assessments, such as a health impact assessment

- Legislative framework" (p. 2)[6]

2. Benefits of implementing a Health in All Policies approach

In two to ten years, implementing an integrated Health in All Policies approach can be expected to bring a number of improved health efficiencies:

1. Positive, measurable health impacts distributed equitably across the population.
2. Evidence-informed public policy, programs and legislation able to measure, monitor, evaluate and report health impacts over time.
3. New efficiencies at intergovernmental, interministerial and intersectoral levels by integrating of social determinants of health (known to impact population health) into public policy, programs and legislation.
4. New models that consolidate social, economic and environmental goals.
5. Increased partnerships among and between governments, civil society and the private sector to enhance accountability, transparency and engagement.

Shared messages to advance Health in All Polices

1. Our health is affected by many factors beyond access to our high-quality health system.
2. Optimal well-being should be available to all.
3. Health for all means ensuring adequate income, food, clothing, housing and necessary social services.
4. Social determinants of health demand a Health in All Policies approach.
5. We need to pay special attention to individuals and populations in society who are marginalized.
6. Health is good business. Healthy Canadians mean a highly productive workforce and stable communities.
7. Let's work together to implement this action plan to promote health in all our policies.

Structural needs to advance Health in All Policies

- A shared paradigm in policy circles that leads to broad-based support, partnership and momentum
- Explicit, collaborative, trans-sector approaches to policy-making
- Models that can provide economic and evaluative data on impact and outcomes
- Dedicated and sustainable resourcing (including funding and training)
- Legislated authority from government on processes and resources
- High-level political will and leadership to support implementation

- A supra-departmental organization to establish new, permanent organizational structures or a substantial assignment of new responsibilities to an existing structure

Assessment needs to support Health in All Policies

Along with ways to adjust policies, programs, legislation or regulations to improve the health of those subjected to conditions that make them vulnerable, we must be able to

- assess the impact our policies, programs or laws have on the root causes of health inequities as framed by the social determinants of health: income, education, housing, early childhood development, social exclusion/social support, employment status and conditions, food security, natural and built environments, transportation and health-care access; and

- assess unfair differences in the opportunities and outcomes on individuals or populations either at risk or marginalized by poverty or circumstances, such as aboriginal groups, low income groups, immigrants and refugees, women, persons with disabilities and single parents.

3. Turning an action plan into action

Below are options for agencies and organizations to take action on. Customize each suggestion to your situation, keeping in mind the groups you need to work with and the groups you are trying to impact.

A. Build public awareness and strengthen insights

1. Decide who is currently using a Health in All Policies approach. Understand who is doing what, with what results, and who is influencing future action.

2. Ask your local/regional/national governments to pay attention to Health in All Policies. Explain the concept and disseminate information.

3. Find partners to collaborate with in delivering your message (e.g., advocacy coalitions) and disseminate it. Use a variety of communications channels including social media, meetings, newsletters and letters to decision-makers.

4. Review the policies in your environment that affect people's health. What are the change processes and how can you influence them?

5. Find Health in All Policies examples that are both working and not working. Develop cases for use with different media.

B. Develop a greater voice for organizations

1. Conduct an environmental scan to determine where Health in All Policies is functioning in your environment.

2. Find priorities in common for partners to capitalize on that are relevant, timely and funded.

3. Identify other organizations not yet involved, such as housing groups and others, and piggy-back initiatives with them.

4. Build awareness of the Health in All Policies potentials among your organizational and individual members.

5. Approach your own constituents and offer information and options for action.

6. Institute board-level conversations to make Health in All Policies a priority.

7. Learn and share experience.

C. Establish supporting strategies and examples

1. Increase your influence on decision-makers by coordinating with partners and approaching governments together.

2. Develop a Health in All Policies position statement for your organization.

3. Distribute international examples of success to partners and influencers.

4. Generate examples of incentives for decision-makers, such as tax credits for corporate social responsibility.

D. Create a forum to support the national action plan

1. Bring "healthy" companies to the table. Work with them and get them talking to governments.

2. Promote the benefits of collaboration to industry.

3. Bring champions to the table to promote the Health in All Policies approach.

A Message from the Canadian Nurses Association

The Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) has been working to promote the integration of a Health in All Policies approach for all policies, laws and public programs before they are introduced.

One key value of a Health in All Policies approach is that it helps us understand the extent to which decisions outside the health system affect our health. In fact, studies show that social

disparities — in such areas as income, employment, housing, education, food security, social inclusion and the environment — are directly related to health disparities in different segments of the population.

In the preceding action plan, CNA is seeking collaboration on Health in All Policies. To effect real change, however, we need engagement by stakeholders such as:

- ✓ Health-care groups and organizations
- ✓ Federal/provincial/territorial/regional governments, organizations, agencies and associations
- ✓ Key policy influencers, e.g., health leaders, government leaders, health-care providers
- ✓ The Canadian public (in particular, equity-seeking populations)

Our national action plan seeks to:

1. Build public awareness and strengthen insights on the importance of a Health in All Policies approach in Canada.
2. Increase collaborative engagement by public, private and non-governmental organizations to support the adoption of a Health in All Policies approach.
3. Influence decision-makers to support a Health in All Policies approach through common messaging and action.

Notes

[1] Keon, W. J., & Pepin, L. (2008). *A healthy, productive Canada: A determinants of health approach.* Final report of the Senate subcommittee on population health. Retrieved from http://www.parl.gc.ca/content/sen/committee/402/popu/rep/rephealth1jun09-e.pdf

[2] Canadian Nurses Association, Canadian Medical Association. (2011). *Principles to guide health care transformation in Canada.* Retrieved from http://www.cna-aiic.ca/sitecore%20modules/web/~/media/cna/files/en/guiding_principles_hc_e.pdf#search=%22PRinciples to guide health care transformation%22

[3] WHO, Government of South Australia. (2010). *Adelaide statement on health in all policies.* Retrieved from http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/d4f9bd0043aee08bb586fded1a914d95/omseet-sahealth-100610.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CACHEID=d4f9bd0043aee08bb586fded1a914d95

[4] On Citizens' Juries, see http://jefferson-center.org/

[5] On Health Lens Analysis, see http://tinyurl.com/lub9h9r

[6] WHO, Government of South Australia. (2010).