

# Together We Can Make It Work:

## **Street Health Community Nursing Foundation: Advocacy and Political Action Against Poverty and Homelessness - A Case Study**

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Community Health Nurses Conference  
May 15-18      Halifax, NS



# History

- Need identified by members of homeless drop in.
- 1986 – volunteer RNs; 1989 – first funding for 4 RNs.
- 1992 - 2005 – services expanded to help meet community needs. Now include: nursing, mental health case management, identification services, research and harm reduction programs.
- 2011 – 20 staff.

# About Street Health

- Services based on Social Determinants of Health eg.
  - Housing
  - Income
  - Access to health care
  - Food security
- Street-based
- Client involvement
- Community empowerment



# About Street Health

- Share expertise through training & education
- Build coalitions & partnerships
- Social justice perspective
- Harm reduction approach



# Goals

## Goal #1: Improve Health Status

- Programs
  - Nursing Clinics and Follow up
  - Mental Health Support (Case Management)
  - ID Replacement and Storage
  - Harm Reduction
- Activities
  - Advocacy
  - Education
  - Peer Involvement

# Goals

## Goal #2: Promote Healthy Public Policy

- Conduct Advocacy through:
  - Key government contacts
  - Media
  - Research
  - Lobbying
  - Coalitions
  - Education
  - Social Actions



# Advocacy

- **Embedded in the job descriptions at Street Health**
- **Examples:**
  - **Client specific**
    - Income support/Housing issues
    - Multidisciplinary collaboration
  - **Systemic**
    - TB Coalition
    - Community Advisory Panels
    - Health Providers Against Poverty
    - Lobbying efforts at municipal/provincial level

# Hunger Inquiry 2010-2011

## **A recent example of collaboration through systemic advocacy**

- **Catalysts:**

- Prevalence of poverty and hunger in Toronto
- Policy changes eg. decreases to Special Diet Allowance
- Recession
- Rising food costs (predicted to increase by 7% this year)

- **Objectives**

- Examine why Torontonians are hungry
- Gather evidence about the effects of hunger and malnourishment
- Produce a report including recommendations
- Mobilize those impacted by hunger to create change

# Hunger Inquiry November 23, 2010

- 6 panel members
- Deputants
- Follow up after inquiry:
  - Development of recommendations
  - Interviews with media
  - Creation of report based on proceedings
  - Advocacy campaign (ongoing)



# Key Findings of Hunger Inquiry

**“The number of malnourished, chronically hungry Canadians is growing at an alarming rate.”**

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- Food insecurity is tightly tied to problems of income
- Shortages of affordable housing forces individuals to choose between shelter and food

# Key Recommendations

## 27 recommendations were created as a result of this inquiry

- Ontario Government must increase the minimum wage to support health and wellbeing
- Ontario Government must implement a substantial increase to social assistance rates
- Federal MP's must vote for bill C-304 (National Housing Strategy)



# Advocacy Outcomes from Inquiry

**Poverty is a large barrier to health. Nurses are responsible to advocate for health public policy as a means of health promotion.**

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- Event widely covered by mainstream media (CBC radio, Toronto Star feature article)
- Report can be used as an advocacy tool
- Collaboration with other organizations
  - RNAO partnership
- Follow up campaign- Petition to Raise Incomes (Recession Relief Coalition, Street Health)

# Thank you!

## Questions?



# Contact Us

## Street Health

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