

Together We Can Make It Work:

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

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.”

- 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.

- 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

- Jessica Hales- jessica@streethealth.ca
- Joyce Rankin- joyce@streethealth.ca

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- **Hunger Inquiry:** <http://recessionreliefcoalition.yolasite.com/>
 - **Website:** <http://www.streethealth.ca>
 - **Email:** info@streethealth.ca
 - **Phone:** 416-921-8668