



Collaborative influence-in-action

Case story: Integrating equity in environmental health practice

TWO NCCs IDENTIFY AND RESPOND TO ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLIC HEALTH PRACTITIONER NEEDS

When staff at the National Collaborating Centres (NCCs) for Environmental Health and for Determinants of Health first discussed working together on a new resource about bedbugs, they had no idea it would be the start of a ground-breaking collaboration. Together, they had identified a gap: environmental public health practitioners had only minimally discussed how to integrate health equity and determinants of health in their practice. Realizing that their organizations were uniquely positioned to start a pan-Canadian conversation, and strengthen public health practice, they set to work.

Pilot study reveals need for training and revisiting scope of practice



The two NCCs conducted a pilot study on needs and gaps for environmental public health practitioners to address health equity in two provinces. Participants described the challenge of balancing their mandate to enforce public health regulations with a recognition that their decisions can have a profound effect on people who are vulnerable. What's more, they needed training and accessible resources to address social determinants such as poor living conditions, poverty, food insecurity, and lack of access to power.

What is the role of environmental public health practitioners?

Public health inspectors and environmental health officers are professionals who work to ensure we live in healthy environments. They ensure food safety in restaurants and at public events, monitor drinking water quality, prevent and manage communicable disease outbreaks, assess soil and air quality, promote tobacco control and injury prevention, and contribute to healthy land use planning decisions. In addition to facility licensing and inspections, they educate the public and partner with other public health professionals.

NCCs responded with accessible resources and collaborations to shift local and regional practice

- An online handbook developed by the BC Centre for Disease Control with supporting input from the NCCs.
- A practical framework for action and an accompanying user guide.



- Key resources for environmental public health practitioners: A curated reading list.
- Series of national and provincial knowledge exchange and learning events focused on assessing inspection practice from an equity lens.
- Consultations with individual practitioners and regional health authorities/public health units.
- A glossary of health equity in the context of environmental public health (in press)

Partnership with CIPHI strengthens learning and core competencies

In 2016, NCCs helped plan the national annual education conference of the Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspector (CIPHI), helping to integrate an equity lens into the program. The two NCCs delivered several well-attended training workshops to the largest learning event for Canadian environmental public health practitioners. They have since been invited to submit feedback on how to integrate health equity into the core professional competencies for environmental public health practitioners through the CIPHI Instructional Objectives that are used to guide public health inspector training programs in Canada.

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Strengthening public health across Canada: The influence of the National Collaborating Centres for Public Health is available in its entirety in electronic format (PDF) at www.nccph.ca.

La version française est également disponible au www.cnsp.ca sous le titre *Appuyer la santé publique partout au Canada - l'influence des Centres de collaboration nationale en santé publique*.

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