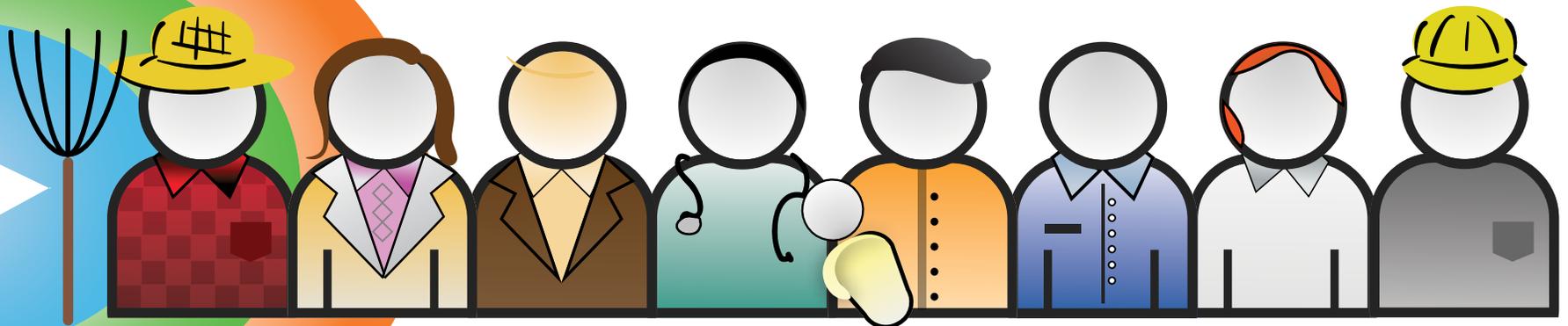


Let's Start a Conversation About *Health* . . .

and Not Talk About *Health Care* at All

USER GUIDE



Acknowledgements

Thank you to the Sudbury & District Health Unit for providing permission to adopt their Let's Start a Conversation video and user guide.

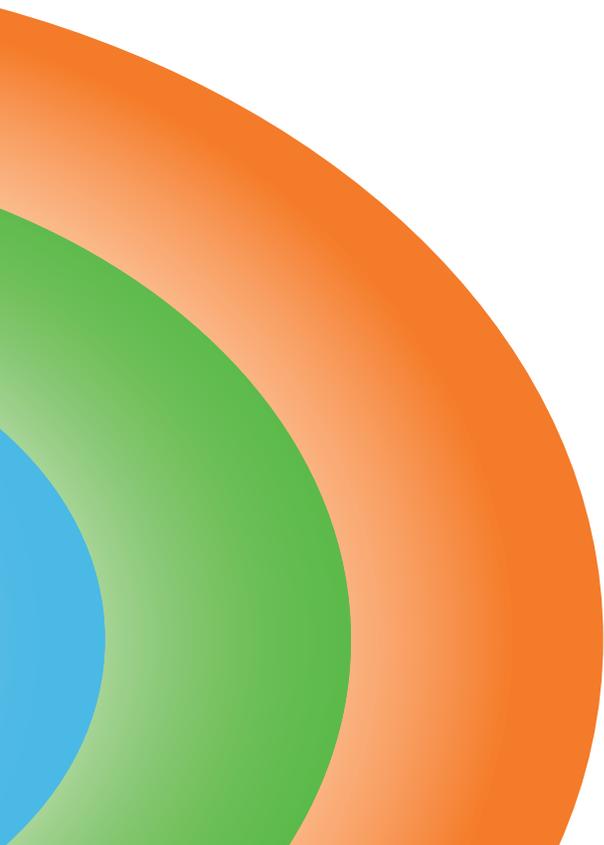
Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) has been able to adapt these resources thanks to the SMDHU Social Determinants of Health Steering Committee and with the financial support from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. This funding, part of the 9000 Nurses Commitment initiative, is a key component of the provincial health human resource strategy, which aligns with the Ontario Poverty Reduction Strategy and the Mental Health and Addictions Strategy.

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Adapted with the permission of the Sudbury & District Health Unit.

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1

A few words from the Medical Officer of Health

Let's start a conversation about health . . . and not talk about health care at all.

The Let's Start a Conversation . . . video and user guide were developed as tools to further engage individuals and organizations from all sectors in the achievement of healthy communities. We hope that community partners—schools, social services, businesses, community groups— find it informative and useful when thinking about what determines achieving a healthy and long life for everyone.

Ask someone what they wish for the children in their lives and often the answers are related to happiness, having a home, a good job, family and friends and being independent. In common language this is what is meant by the social determinants of health. It is having those elements in your life that will help to provide you with a healthy and long life.

The socio-economic factors are complex and intertwined throughout the life course of individuals. The need to look at health beyond health care is vital in order to understand the root causes of poor health. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), poverty is the single largest determinant affecting health.

As a result, the only way to improve health and narrow the health gap in an equitable way is to bring up the level of health of groups of people who are worse off than that of groups who are better off.

As the video states, “We are residents of Simcoe Muskoka, known for supporting each other, working together and our community connections.” Let's build on the momentum of the great work that is already underway. Let's show that, individually and collectively, we can make decisions and choices that are good for our communities and good for our health.

Let's Start a Conversation . . . was adapted from a Sudbury & District Health Unit video that was shown to 1,000 delegates at the World Health Organization's Conference in Rio de Janeiro. We acknowledge and thank the Sudbury & District Health Unit for allowing us to modify their video and user guide to reflect Simcoe Muskoka.

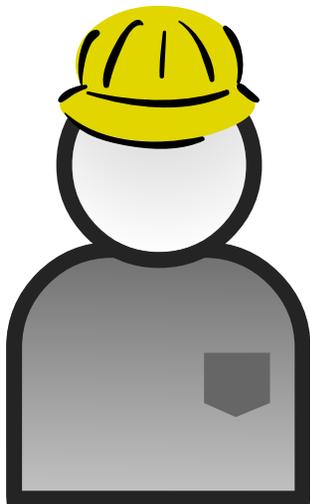
We'd like your feedback about the video, as well as ideas on how to achieve our collective goal of creating healthier communities. Please send your comments and questions to us at [Your Health Connection](#) or call 705-721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520.

We can build a healthier Simcoe Muskoka.

Dr. Charles Gardner
Medical Officer of Health
Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit

2

About the *Let's Start a Conversation...* video



Let's Start a Conversation About Health... and Not Talk About Health

Care at All is a five-minute video highlighting the fact that health is about much more than access to medical care. It highlights that everyone has different opportunities for health, largely influenced by their social and economic conditions. Using this broad view of health, the video describes actions that different people and organizations can take. It encourages everyone—families, builders, volunteers, business people, students, farmers, health care professionals and community leaders—to start a conversation about health... and not talk about health care at all.



Have you seen it yet?

Watch the video online at

www.youtube.com/watch?v=iaFtDRsdUHQ

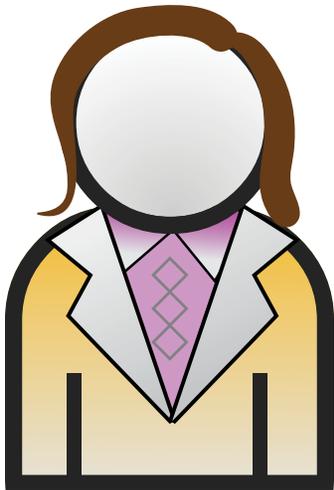
or at www.simcoemuskokakealth.org

3

Five key messages

from

Let's Start a Conversation...



1 Health improves at every rung up the income and social ladder. Yes, our health is influenced by genetics and behaviours such as smoking, diet, and physical activity. However, the greatest predictor of how healthy we are is our social and economic status.

2 Everyone has different opportunities for health, largely influenced by their social and economic conditions.

Let's Start a Conversation... presents the story of Daniel and his mom. Daniel is in the ER again for asthma. His asthma is worse because of where he lives and his mom can't afford his asthma medication. Daniel's mom is working part time with no benefits, she has lost her job in the factory. She does not have the education required to find another job. With few friends, social supports and unhealthy housing, Daniel and his mom manage the best they can to cope with very challenging circumstances. It's more than health care that is needed to fix Daniel's problems. Employment, education, housing, social networks—each of these factors can promote or limit opportunities for health.

3 Social and economic conditions are the result of the actions that all of us can choose to take. Individually and collectively, we CAN make decisions and choices that are good for our communities and good for our health. For example, as individuals, how we vote influences the decisions that are made by governments and community leaders. As

businesses and agencies, the programs and services we provide can contribute to healthy environments. As professionals, the way in which we work with clients and colleagues can enhance community capacity, participation and inclusion. As leaders and elected officials, the policies we support—housing, finance, education, transportation—all shape the way we live and our opportunities to be healthy.

4 Health care alone cannot fix our health problems. An effective health care system is essential for treating us when we are ill. But our system is expensive and growing at a rate that is outpacing other sectors—a rate that many believe is unsustainable. Health, of course, is about much more than illness care. Individual and community health, well-being and prosperity are created when all sectors invest in health-supporting actions.

5 We all have a role to play! Public health staff, partners and community members from all sectors and backgrounds possess unique strengths, skills and perspectives on what makes our community healthy. Let's start a conversation about the actions we can all take to improve health... and not talk about health care at all. **Contact us at www.simcoemuskokahealth.org or call 705-721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520.**

4

How to use this guide



This user guide and video are designed to help navigate through a variety of messages, possible questions and potential solutions to the complex issues that impact our health.

Use this guide... For example:

✓ As a resource to **build your own understanding** of the diverse factors that impact health.

You refer to the **Ideas and inspiration for action** section of this guide for some concrete examples of how you might engage other sectors in your work to reduce health inequities.

✓ As a “go-to” source for **answers to frequently asked questions**.

You shared the **Let’s Start a Conversation...** video with a colleague. She asks you, “So, are you trying to say that we should stop funding hospitals and give more money to public health?” You refer to the guide’s sections on **Challenging common perceptions about health** and **Communicating a complex message... simply** for suggestions to help answer the question.

✓ As a tool to help **lead and participate in discussions with others**.

You are helping to coordinate a group of local community residents and agency representatives interested in promoting physical activity. At one of your meetings, you view **Let’s Start a Conversation...** and use some of the guide’s **Tips and tools for starting a conversation** to lead a discussion about how it may influence the group’s future advocacy and health promotion activities.

It’s important for all sectors in the community to think about ways they can improve the social and economic conditions through the work they currently do. For example, people are used to seeing public health staff provide immunizations, promote car seat safety, inspect small water systems, provide smoking cessation supports or prenatal classes. However, you are as likely to hear about public health staff working to increase quality housing, reduce poverty, create jobs or encourage inclusiveness.

5

Daniel's story— a reminder about health equity



Our health is influenced by a broad range of factors. These include genetics, individual lifestyles and behaviours, as well as the physical, social and economic environments in which we live. *Let's Start a Conversation...* presents the story of Daniel and his mom's experiences which have been influenced by some very challenging social and economic circumstances.

So . . . what does Daniel's story have to do with health equity?

Health inequities are differences in health status experienced by different groups of people that are systemic, socially produced, and unfair and unjust. ***In other words: The avoidable differences in health between groups that are caused by our living conditions (jobs, schools, housing, neighbourhoods, etc.).***

In Daniel's case, his asthma is:

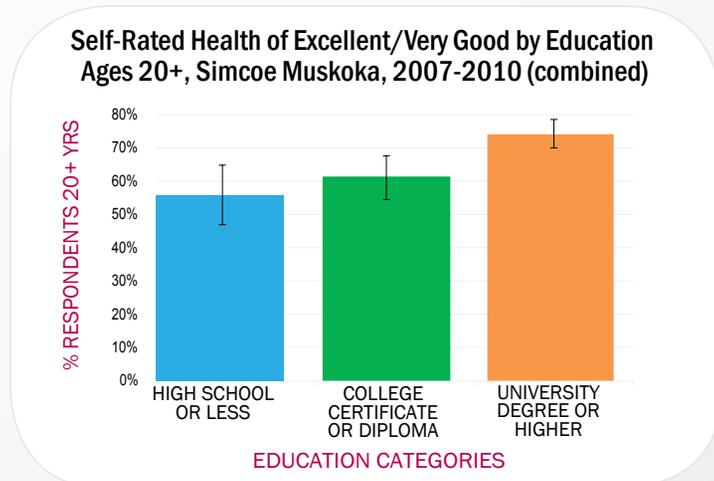
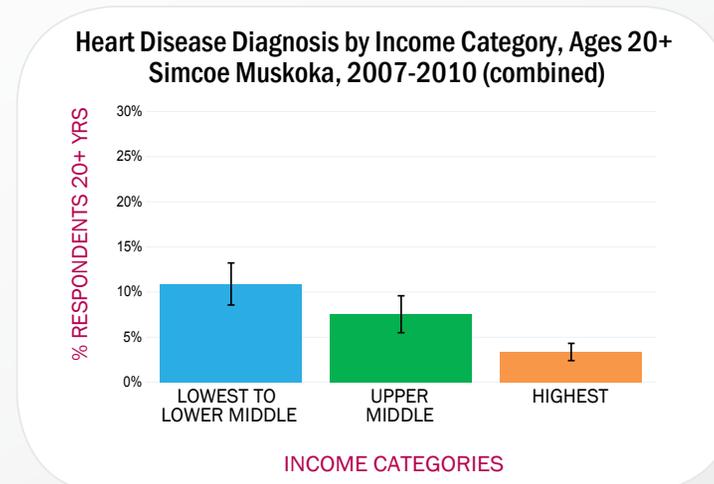
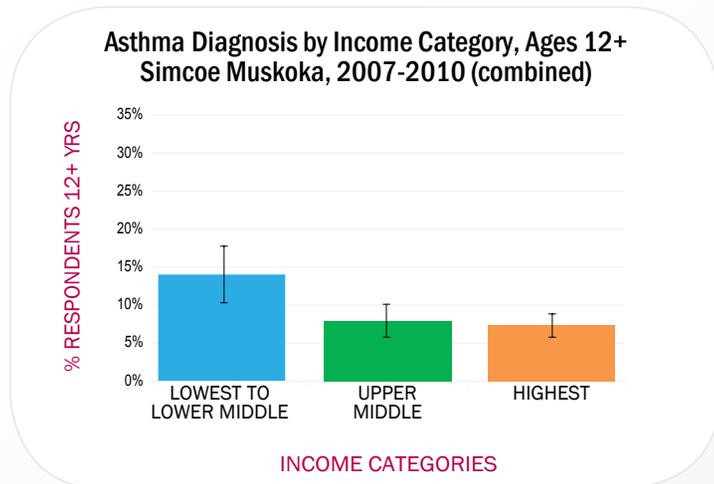
- **socially produced**—by his mom's challenges with unhealthy housing, lack of job, limited education and few social supports.
- **avoidable**—through increased access to affordable, quality housing, employment and training opportunities, and supportive, inclusive neighbourhoods.

Daniel and his mom are at greater risk of poor health because of their social and economic conditions. Examples of others who may be at risk of health inequities include people living on low incomes, people with limited education, people who are unemployed or underemployed, people living in rural, remote or isolated communities, people who are living with disabilities or mental illness, people who are homeless or living in unstable housing, and those people who might be discriminated against due to their culture, race, language, sexual orientation, etc.

5

What does local data tell us about health inequities in our communities?

Using local data in the form of graphs can help people have greater understanding of how inequities in health occur in our communities and which populations are experiencing a greater negative impact. It is important to look beyond lifestyle behaviours by considering how social and economic factors can influence behaviours and overall health. Below are some examples that illustrate how health is impacted by income and education in Simcoe Muskoka.



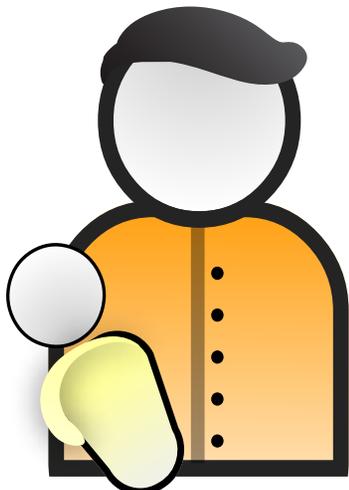
— 95% CONFIDENCE INTERVAL

The income categories are based on total annual income and the size of the household. For more information visit Health Stats at www.simcoemuskokahealthstats.org/resources/glossary.aspx#incomecat.

Data Source: Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) [2007/08- 2009/10] combined, Statistics Canada, Ontario Share File, Distributed by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

6

Communicating a complex message ... simply



Some content adapted from: *A New Way to Talk About the Social Determinants of Health*, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2010.

Health, health equity, social inequities in health

These terms hold different meanings for different people. It can be challenging to find the right words to explain messages about health. In addition, the language we use shapes our audience's perceptions, understanding and their ability to connect with the ideas we are sharing. In addition to the **Tips and tools for starting a conversation**, the **Plain language glossary** provides simple explanations for commonly used public health concepts and expressions (a.k.a. jargon). It also provides some general tips for sharing the messages of **Let's Start a Conversation...** with others.



Check out this touching video

for an example of how our choice of words can dramatically influence our message at

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hzgzim5m7oU

6

Tips for talking about health and health equity

1 Describe ideas—don't use jargon. It is possible to explain social inequities in health without using the term “equity” at all. Try these phrases to describe the concepts of social determinants of health and health equity:

- *Health starts long before illness—in our homes, schools, and jobs.*
- *Not all members of our communities have the same opportunities to be healthy.*
- *Everyone should have the opportunity to make the choices that allow them to live a long, healthy life, regardless of their income, education or ethnic background.*
- *Neighbourhoods and jobs shouldn't be hazardous to your health.*
- *Opportunities for health start long before medical care is needed.*
- *Health begins where we live, learn, work and play.*

2 Use simple, informal language. Avoid using academic terms or jargon. Example: try using “living conditions” rather than “social determinants of health.”

3 Identify the problem, but focus on solutions. The closing message of **Let's Start a Conversation...** is “Let's start talking!” Provide others with concrete examples of actions they can take to improve the health of their communities. Remember, actions can be as small as “starting a conversation” with others, or as large as creating a policy or program within an organization or for a community.

See the **Ideas and inspiration for action** section of this guide for examples of actions that could be supported by a variety of community sectors.

4 Acknowledge, but challenge commonly accepted perceptions about health. Example: “Eating well and exercising are important, but the things that contribute most to our health are how much money we have and our status within our community.”

See the **Challenging common perceptions about health** section of this guide for more ideas and examples.

5 Use statistical data carefully. The way in which data are presented influences how it will be perceived and understood. To help your audience understand the data:

- Use one important fact rather than many facts in one message.
- Present data within a larger context or “story” to make it more meaningful.
- Use visual tools, such as graphs or maps, to illustrate statistical information.

6 Emphasize different messages for different audiences, but remember, we ALL have a role to play. Different audiences may relate to some messages from **Let's Start a Conversation...** more than others. Health sector audiences may connect most with the need to reduce health care costs. Members of the business community may appreciate the call for a diversified economy. Many viewers may already be very active in the area of improving community living conditions and influencing the decisions that shape health. Highlight the many positive efforts already underway and focus on the benefits of having different sectors work together to strengthen actions and advocacy efforts. The ultimate message of **Let's Start a Conversation...** is that everyone—families, builders, volunteers, business people, students, farmers, health care professionals, community leaders—can start a conversation about health... and not talk about health care at all.

6

Plain language glossary

This glossary provides simple explanations to common jargon.

Health equity

When all members of our communities have opportunities to be healthy.

Everyone should have the opportunity to make choices that allow them to live a long, healthy life, regardless of their income, education or ethnic background.

Social inequities in health

The avoidable differences in health between groups that are caused by our living conditions (jobs, schools, housing, neighbourhoods, etc.).

Social determinants of health

The living conditions—income, education, jobs, housing, social supports—that shape our opportunities to be healthy.

Health starts where we live, learn, work and play.

Everyone needs access to health care, but healthy communities and living conditions make it less likely that we will need it.

Levelling up

Giving everyone a chance to live a healthy life.

Working to reduce the gap in health between the most advantaged and least advantaged members of our communities.

Priority or vulnerable populations

People who face significant barriers to health.

People who have fewer opportunities to be healthy.

Poverty

People who can't afford the basics in life.

People who struggle to get by.

Low-income workers / working poor

People who work for a living and still struggle to get by.

Living wage

An income that allows people to put food on the table, support their families and have a safe place to call home.

Policies

Formal or informal rules that set common expectations and guide actions. Policies can be set by individuals, groups, agencies or governments.

Social advantage or disadvantage

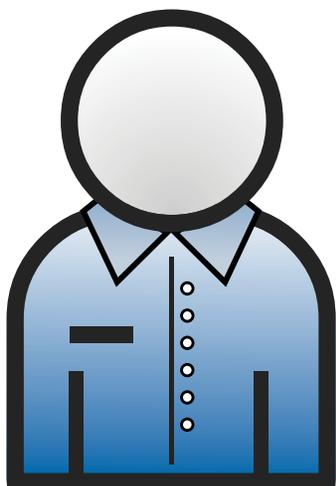
A person's place on the income and social ladder (their wealth, education, job, etc.). Our social status shapes our ability to be healthy.

Social inclusion

An inclusive community offers support, respect and opportunities to participate for everyone regardless of culture, education or income.

7

Challenging common perceptions about health



There is no silver bullet,

no single word or fact will suddenly transform how people think about health. It is an intensely personal issue that carries with it complex beliefs, conflicted values, and a deeply divided electorate about what leads to better health.

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2010

We all carry existing beliefs and perceptions about health; what causes us to be healthy or sick, and what actions and conditions will help us to stay well. One of the objectives of **Let's Start a Conversation...** is to challenge some of the most commonly held myths about health. Use the examples provided on the following pages to encourage others to think about health in new ways and about their own role in creating healthy communities.

Perception

1

Individual choices and health behaviours—diet, smoking, physical activity, etc.—are the reason that some people are healthier than others.

Challenging the perception

Acknowledge that lifestyle choices have a significant impact on people’s health and well-being. Use the story of Daniel to encourage discussion about how the choices individuals make are shaped by the opportunities they have. *Personal choices, such as diet, drinking, smoking and physical activity, are crucial to our overall health. But, making healthy choices isn’t just about having good habits, common sense or discipline. For example, some communities or neighbourhoods have easy access to fresh, affordable food; others have only fast food, convenience and liquor stores. Some have well maintained playgrounds and safe places to exercise and play; others do not. Some neighbourhoods are friendly and clean; others are noisy and perceived to be “unsafe.” The choices we make are influenced by our living conditions and the opportunities that we have.*

2

The greatest influence on our health is our ability to access quality health care and treatment. Challenges such as wait times, doctor and nurse shortages, hospital bed shortages, etc., are the reason for poor health.

Acknowledge the critical importance of quality health care in order to treat illness and restore health. However, highlight that healthy social and economic conditions can help to prevent illness and disease in the first place. *Access to health care (or illness care) does have a significant impact on our health. However, the greatest predictor of our health is where our income, education and occupation place us on the income and social ladder. The conditions in which we live, learn, work and play, largely determine whether or not we need to visit our doctor, clinic or hospital in the first place.*

3

Health inequities are the differences in health experienced by different groups of people. They are natural or normal within communities. These inequities have always existed and will continue to exist regardless of our actions or government intervention.

There will always be some people who are healthier than others. Emphasize, however, that we can make decisions, and shape our communities in ways that increase everyone’s opportunities to be healthy. *Health inequities are defined as “unfair, unjust and avoidable.” They are neither natural, nor inevitable. Highlight that health, and health inequities are the direct result of decisions that are made by all of us—individuals, agencies, businesses, communities and every level of government. More importantly, we CAN make decisions differently for the health of our communities.*

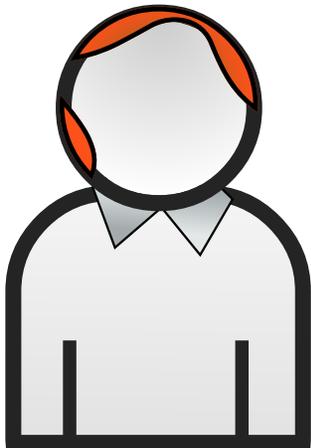
4

Many of the policies and actions that are needed to support health and reduce health inequities are too costly and are not sustainable.

Highlight some of the known positive economic impacts of healthy communities and individuals. Draw attention to the information presented in *Let’s Start a Conversation...* about the increasing costs of health care that will likely continue if we don’t invest in healthy social and economic conditions. *Sustained health improvements among individuals and communities stimulate economic growth. Supporting opportunities for health where people live, work, learn and play supports productive employees, customers and communities. Healthy people support healthy economies through their participation and spending. Money that might otherwise be spent providing health treatment for unhealthy individuals may now be invested in different ways across community sectors.*

8

Tips and tools for starting a conversation



Some content taken or adapted from the UNNATURAL CAUSES Discussion Guide and Action Toolkit, a project of California Newsreel. Copyright © 2008 California Newsreel.

Tips

Before you start a conversation with others . . .

- ✓ **Remember**, social inequities impact each of us in different ways. Although we may all be working towards the same goals—better health, increased opportunities—we bring different experiences, assumptions and resources to the task. Individual wealth, job status, language, race/ethnicity, skin colour, gender and sexual orientation can affect our views and how we are viewed by others. **Let's Start a Conversation...** is a tool to help encourage discussion and reflection, challenge some existing perceptions, and generate ideas for action. As someone sharing this tool, **your job is to create dialogue, be non-judgmental, explore creative options, and help inspire action.**
- ✓ **Ask yourself** what's happening outside your organization or field that may support your work and your message? How can you promote successes in other sectors such as a promising initiative or new report? Where can you find allies to help you share your message, overcome obstacles, or bring new partners to the table? How will you handle conflict and criticism when different perspectives are shared?
- ✓ **Prepare to follow up.** Sharing **Let's Start a Conversation...** video with others is a first step; the “real” work begins after people watch it. How can you continue to engage others over the long term? How can you maintain momentum and action after the excitement generated by the video fades?

Refer to the **Ideas and inspiration** section of the guide for some examples of next steps for action.

8

Tips and Tools

A Beliefs: before and after

We all hold certain beliefs about health: what makes us healthy, and what makes us sick. Here are some guiding questions to offer before watching **Let's Start a Conversation...**

Participants should answer the questions individually to allow for the most honest and reflective responses.

Questions you may want to ask include:

- What determines whether we are sick or healthy?
- Are some groups or members of our community more at risk of being unhealthy? Why?
- Who or what is most responsible for how healthy we are? Why?
- What kinds of things can we do to improve people's health (as individuals, as communities, as governments, etc.)?

Ask these questions again, after watching **Let's Start a Conversation...**

- Facilitate a group discussion about whether or not people's ideas have changed? How have they changed? Why or why not?

B Community focus

Health starts in the communities where we live, work, learn and play. Our communities represent great opportunities and resources for action to improve health and reduce health inequities. Use **Let's Start a Conversation...** to prompt viewers to think about their own communities and the factors that impact their community's health.

You might ask:

- For better or for worse, what conditions depicted in **Let's Start a Conversation...** do you feel most affect health in your community (housing, education, employment, social inclusion, etc.)? In what ways?
- How can you make things better in your community? What are the greatest challenges? What additional resources are needed? Who are your partners or potential partners to work with?
- What initiatives are already underway in your community that can help improve health? How might you build on the momentum of these initiatives?

C Five key messages and facilitated discussion questions

Let's Start a Conversation... presents five key messages about the conditions and actions that determine health. These messages can be explored through facilitated discussion.

Questions that might prompt meaningful dialogue include:

- What social and economic conditions described in **Let's Start a Conversation...** support and encourage healthy choices?
- What actions and policies at the local, provincial and federal level (for example, education, transportation, housing, etc.) might increase people's opportunities to be healthy and reduce health inequities?
- Why do we typically only think of health in terms of health care and personal behaviours? Where do these perceptions come from?
- What role might you play in improving the health of our communities?

A Refer to the **Challenging common perceptions about health** section of this guide for more information about commonly held beliefs about health and health inequities.

B The **Community strengths and stressors** exercise may spark additional ideas about existing conditions and opportunities within communities.

8

Tips and Tools

D Community strengths and stressors

The following chart lists some of the factors that had an impact on Daniel from **Let's Start a Conversation...** These factors may be positive or negative influences in people's lives and in our communities.

- As a group, or individually, have participants think about each factor. Have them think about whether each factor is generally a positive or negative influence on the health of their community, and have them explain why. There will likely be multiple, even contradictory answers for each topic.
- As a group, ask participants to share their results. What are the similarities and differences between responses? Explore why differing perspectives might exist.
- Are there any commonly identified negative influences on health? What actions do participants feel may be necessary to improve those conditions?

Change the list of factors to best reflect issues affecting your community. Other possible factors include: food access and availability, public safety, transportation, green spaces, recreational opportunities.

 <p>Community Strength</p> <p>Why is this a positive influence on health?</p>	<p>Affordable, quality housing Quality education Good jobs and employment opportunities Income and wealth Social supports Business and economic development Quality health care</p>	 <p>Community Stressor</p> <p>Why is this a negative influence on health?</p>
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E Do you know a “Daniel”?

Everyone—families, builders, volunteers, business people, students, farmers, health care professionals, community leaders—has a story to tell about their health and the health of their community. They may even know their own “Daniel” or “Daniel’s mom.” Provide participants with an opportunity to share their own experiences with the social and economic factors that influence health.

You may find that participants naturally share stories that focus on health behaviours or access to health care services. Try to keep the discussion focused on the social and economic conditions that have influenced people’s opportunities to be healthy.

For example:

Instead of asking

“How can we promote healthier behaviours?”

“Who has the worst health?”

“How do we improve access to health care services?”

Ask

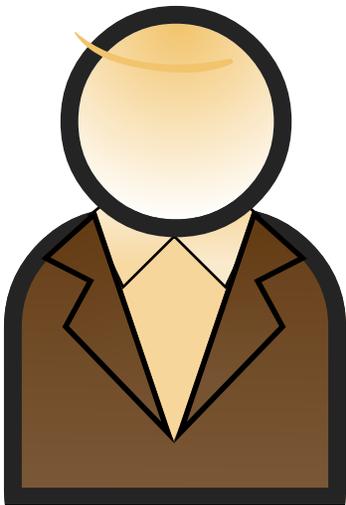
“How can we create the conditions that people need to make healthy choices?”

“Why do some people have fewer opportunities to be healthy?”

“How can we improve living conditions so that people need less access to health care?”

9

Ideas and inspiration for action



Everyone contributes to the health of their community

The closing message of **Let's Start a Conversation...** is, "Let's get talking!" It is meant to prompt viewers to ask "What can I do?" or "What is my role?" Although, not an exhaustive list, the following pages provide examples of concrete actions that community members from all sectors might take to improve the health of their communities today and in the future.

General public

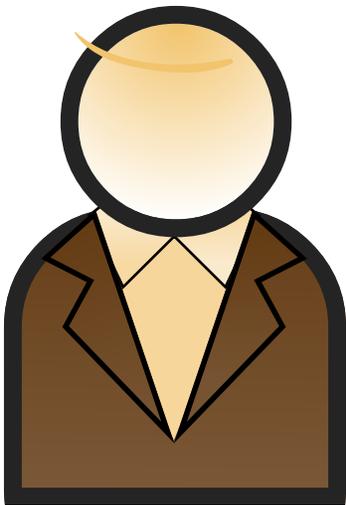
- Become involved in your community. Start small; strive to find ways to make your neighborhood friendly and inclusive.
- Get to know your neighbours; recognize and support those who might be going through a difficult time.
- Become involved with local boards, advisory panels, or begin a new community group.
- Write a letter to your local/provincial government to request changes to policies that affect the health of your community.
- Be vocal against discrimination and injustice in your community.
- Try to reframe your thinking before you judge others; consider the underlying reasons that may lead someone to make unhealthy choices.
- Educate others on factors that influence the health of people in our community... without talking about health care.

Health care sector

- Consider the social and economic conditions that influence your clients and their health.
- Participate in advocacy efforts organized by your professional associations (for example, Registered Nurses Association of Ontario).
- Organize professional development opportunities with other health sector professionals.
- Know what community resources are available to clients to address their social and economic needs (for example, food security, social assistance, subsidized child care, employment training, etc.).
- Share your own experience of how living conditions have impacted the health of your clients.

9

Ideas and inspiration for action



Community and social services sector

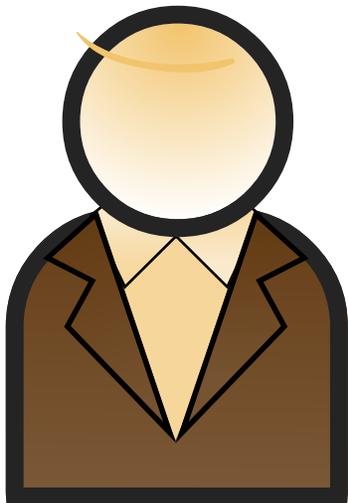
- Identify and address service gaps that reduce opportunities for health for some members of our communities.
- Partner with others to lobby for changes to policies that impact the health of our communities; there is power in numbers with partners working together towards common goals.
- Consider the health impact of your agency's policies and initiatives.
- Seek opportunities to support other agencies with initiatives that improve quality of life in our communities.
- Share your own experience of how living conditions have impacted the health of your clients.

Education sector

- Provide flexible and inclusive opportunities for parents to become involved in their child's education.
- Support programs that address the social and economic needs of students and families within educational settings. This may include school meal or snack programs, subsidized field trips and school events, or culturally specific learning opportunities.
- Provide safe environments and opportunities for students to express personal needs.
- Provide students with resources that promote awareness of the many factors that make and keep us healthy. These could include websites, campaigns, and activities such as the [Do the Math Challenge](#), [The Last Straw](#) and [SPENT](#).
- Encourage and support students to become actively involved with community service initiatives that address the social determinants of health.
- Encourage student involvement in policy change on topics such as social assistance rates, housing, minimum wage increases and student employment opportunities.
- Share your own experience of how living conditions have impacted the health and success of your students.

9

Ideas and inspiration for action



Government/political sector

- Provide opportunities for the public to become involved in decisions that affect their communities.
- Consider the health impact of all proposed policies and initiatives, using a health equity assessment tool.
- Continue to support a healthy built environment (sidewalks, parks, playgrounds, bicycle paths).
- Encourage the creation of green spaces in your community.
- Promote policies and programs that:
 - provide community members with healthy, affordable food sources including fresh local fruit and vegetables
 - increase access to quality, affordable child care
 - improve access to transportation
 - provide low- and no-cost recreation opportunities
 - support living wages
 - help to make your community inclusive and accessible.

Economic sector

- Consider the social and economic conditions that influence your employees and their health.
- Provide flexible work hours and job security.
- Provide on-the-job learning and training opportunities.
- Incorporate workplace wellness initiatives in your workplace.
- Be supportive to others wishing to start businesses in your community.
- Educate others on the benefits of having a healthy, engaged, fully participating workforce.

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Additional resources



Social Determinants of Health: The Canadian Facts

A thorough introduction to the social determinants of our health—why they are important and what can we do to improve them. (Juha Mikkonen and Dennis Raphael, 2010)

Communicating the Social Determinants of Health: Scoping Paper

This Canadian resource highlights some of the challenges and opportunities for raising awareness and understanding about social determinants of health and health inequities. (Wellspring Strategies Inc., 2011)

Health Equity Into Policy Action: FAQs

A resource of the Wellesley Institute, these Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) are designed to provide a basic overview of health equity. They provide a definition of health equity and answer other questions related to why it is important, key issues, challenges, and promising initiatives and programs designed to address health disparities. (Wellesley Institute, 2007)

A New Way to Talk About the Social Determinants of Health

Developed by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, this resource presents “a series of lessons, best practices, recommended language, and “watch-outs” that can support better and more persuasive messages” related to the social determinants of health. (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2010)

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Additional resources



Jason's Story

This deceptively simple story speaks to the complex set of factors or conditions that determine the level of health of every Canadian. (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2011)

Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit's Approach to Addressing the Determinants of Health – A Health Equity Framework

This document guides the health unit staff to address the factors that create inequities in overall health and improve the quality of life for populations at risk of poor health outcomes. (Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, 2012)

Code Red

An example from the Hamilton Poverty Roundtable on reporting issues using local data on poverty in partnership with the local newspaper The Hamilton Spectator. (Hamilton Poverty Roundtable, 2010)

Unnatural Causes

This documentary series by California Newsreel highlights the root causes of socio-economic and racial inequities in health in the United States. The Unnatural Causes website includes links to series excerpts, resources, activities and examples of positive actions taken by communities across North America. (California Newsreel, 2008)

Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit is here to help.

If you have any questions about the *Let's Start a Conversation...* resources, or about health equity in general, contact the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit. Together we can work towards solutions to improve the health of our communities. Let us know how you've used these resources and, in particular, how you have shared them with others. Let's learn together from sharing each other's stories and insights.

Please send your comments and questions to *Your Health Connection* at www.simcoemuskokahealth.org or call 705-721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520.



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