Considering the Social Determinants of Health Inequities

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Terminology

Health Disparities

Difference in the distribution of disease and illness across populations.

Health Inequities

Systemic, unfair , avoidable, and unjust differences in health status and mortality rates. (adapted from M. Whitehead)

Social Determinants of Health Inequity

Economic and social conditions that influence the health of individuals, communities, and jurisdictions as a whole.

Social Justice

Social justice includes economic and social justice, political justice and participation, emancipation and liberation, and autonomy.

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Using a Social Justice Framework to Address Health Inequities

How social, political, economic institutions are organized➔

Social, economic, political inequality ➔

Unequal structuring of life chances ➔

Health inequities

Central social justice question: "**Why is there inequality and how can our organizational structure, policies, and practices change to eliminate health inequities?**" (Hofrichter)

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Applying an Equity Lens to Public Health Work

Traditional	vs.	Social Justice
• Personal responsibility and individual behaviors	→	• Social responsibility to protect common good
• Causes of inequity: genes, bad behavior, accident	→	• Causes of inequity: racism, class and gender exploitation
• Resolution: behavior change; treatment of symptoms	→	• Resolution: tackling racism, class and gender exploitation through political action
• General approach: acceptance of risk as fact of life	→	• General approach: activist perspective to creating conditions for good health

Changing the Questions

Instead of only asking:	Perhaps we should also ask:
Who lacks health care coverage and why?	What policy changes would **redistribute health care resources** more equitably in our community?
How can we create more green space, bike paths, and farmer's markets in vulnerable neighborhoods?	What **policies and practices** by government and commerce discourage access to transportation, recreational resources, and nutritious food in neighborhoods where health is poorest?
Why do people smoke (drink)?	What **social conditions and economic policies** predispose people to the stress that encourages smoking (drinking)?

CHIP Process	Health Equity Actions
Throughout the Process	Engage with communities (including those affected by inequity and the social justice community) to develop their capacity and resources to participate fully in social and political processes
Community Health Assessment	Mandate a reexamination of public health priorities, practices, and use of resources Consider a community-based participatory approach
	Communicate facts about the forces that produce or undermine health to their constituencies, responsible public institutions, and political leaders
Developing Community Health Improvement Plan	Develop a policy agenda for health equity and identify strategic activities with constituencies that supports this agenda

6

Partnerships

- Establish a health equity team of core, diverse, cross-disciplinary members that would lead the effort to identify the root causes of health inequity.
- Build strategic alliances with partners in the social justice community
- Develop interagency/multidisciplinary coordination

Workforce

- Assess staff understanding of health equity
- Identify how the workforce can more systematically respond to the root causes of health inequity
- Raise awareness and encourage dialogue about health inequities

Root Causes

- Conduct assessments that identify the causes of health inequity
- Look beyond behavior change when formulating strategic issues, goals, strategies, and interventions
- Analyze and develop policies that address the sources of health inequity.

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Connecticut Association of Directors of Health, Health Equity Index
http://www.cadh.org/health-equity/health-equity-index.html

Social Determinant Score

2 LOW

1 = LOW 10 = HIGH

Social Determinant	Score
Civic Involvement	1
Community Safety	1
Economic Security	2
Education	2
Employment	3
Housing	3
Environmental Quality	4

Health Outcome Score

3 LOW

1 = LOW 10 = HIGH

Health Outcome	Score
Infectious Disease	1
Childhood Illness	1
Renal Disease	2
Mental Health	2
Health Care Access	2
Liver Disease	2
Life Expectancy	3
Perinatal Care	3
Accidents/Violence	3
Diabetes	3
Cardiovascular	3
Respiratory Illness	4
Cancer	5

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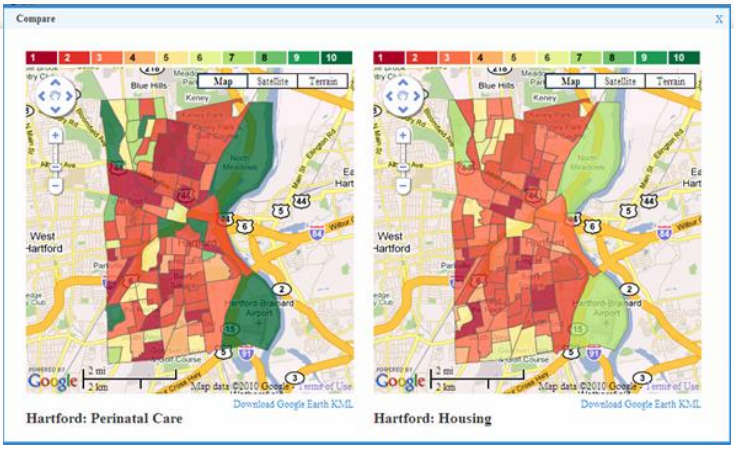

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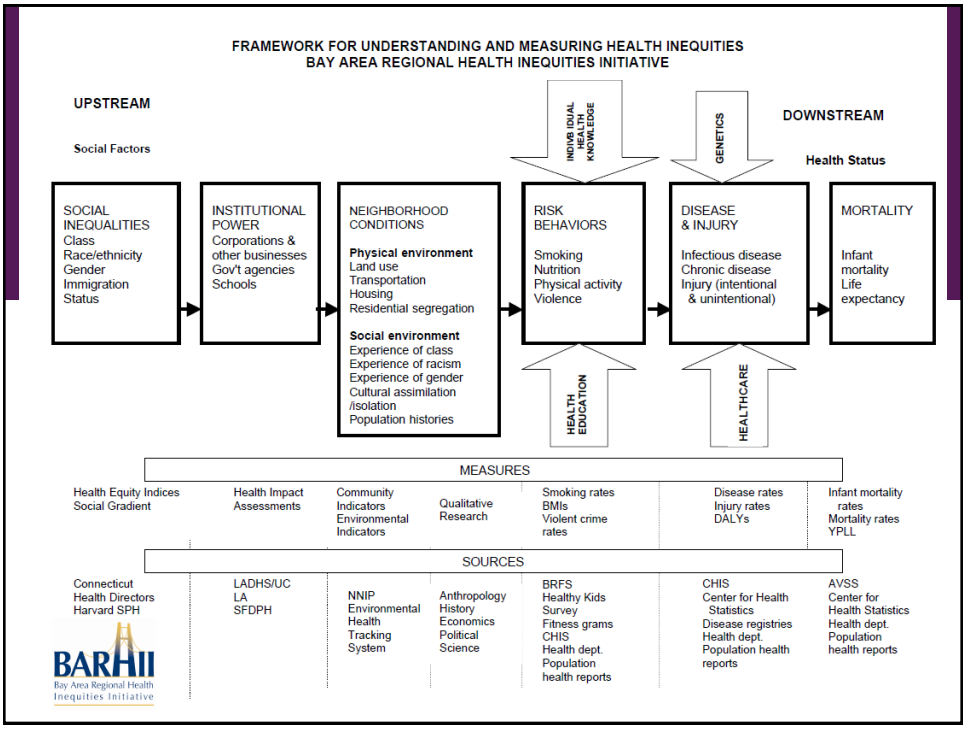

Central Social Justice Question

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PUBLIC HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE & SYSTEMS

Learn More

NACCHO's Health Equity Toolkit

Learning Collaborative for Health Equity and Social Justice

Tackling Health Inequities through Public Health Practice: Theory to Action

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PUBLIC HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE & SYSTEMS

First Steps

- **Local Health Department National Coalition for Health Equity**
  - Build solidarity and share experiences
  - Develop public policy agendas
  - Identify the need for training
  - Increase public awareness.

- **NACCHO's Health Equity Campaign**

Receive a free copy of Unnatural Causes if your department agrees to host a public screening and dialogue session.

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