

Introduction to Community Health

Introduction to Community Health

Key concepts, goals, and foundational elements for anyone new to the field.

1. What Is Community Health?

Aspect	Description
Definition	The science and practice of promoting, protecting, and improving the health of groups of people who share a common geographic location, culture, or interest.
Scope	Encompasses disease prevention, health education, policy development, environmental health, and the delivery of health services at the community level.
Core Principle	Health is viewed as a collective resource; interventions target populations rather than just individuals.

2. Core Objectives

- 1. Prevent disease & injury** – Reduce incidence through vaccination, screening, and safe? environment initiatives.
 - 2. Promote healthy behaviors** – Encourage nutrition, physical activity, tobacco?free living, mental?well?being, etc.
 - 3. Improve access to care** – Remove barriers (financial, geographic, cultural) so all community members can obtain needed services.
 - 4. Address social determinants of health (SDOH)** – Tackle housing, education, employment, and other factors that shape health outcomes.
 - 5. Strengthen community capacity** – Build local leadership, partnerships, and infrastructure for sustainable health improvements.
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3. Key Components of Community Health Practice

Component	Typical Activities
Assessment	Community health needs assessments (CHNAs), epidemiologic surveillance, asset mapping.

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Component	Typical Activities
Planning	Setting SMART goals, developing evidence-based interventions, creating action plans.
Implementation	Delivering programs (e.g., immunization clinics, nutrition workshops), policy advocacy, environmental modifications.
Evaluation	Process, outcome, and impact evaluation; use of indicators (e.g., morbidity rates, health behavior surveys).
Policy & Advocacy	Drafting ordinances, lobbying for funding, engaging stakeholders in decision making.

4. The Social Determinants of Health (SDOH)

Domain	Examples	Why It Matters
Economic Stability	Employment, income, food security	Determines ability to afford care, healthy food, safe housing.
Education	Literacy, school quality	Influences health knowledge and job opportunities.
Social & Community Context	Social support, discrimination, civic participation	Affects stress levels and health-seeking behavior.
Health & Health Care	Access to primary care, health insurance	Directly impacts prevention and treatment.
Neighborhood & Built Environment	Housing quality, transportation, parks, pollution	Shapes daily exposures and opportunities for activity.

Community health programs aim to modify these determinants, not just treat disease.

5. Levels of Intervention

Level	Focus	Example
Primary	Prevent disease before it occurs	Immunization campaigns, tobacco-free policies.

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Secondary	Early detection & prompt treatment	Cancer screening programs, hypertension monitoring.
Tertiary	Reduce complications & improve quality of life	Chronic disease management groups, rehabilitation services.
Quaternary	Prevent overmedicalization & unnecessary interventions	Guidelines to avoid low-value testing.

6. Stakeholders & Partnerships

- **Residents & Community Members** – Primary beneficiaries; provide local insight.
- **Public Health Agencies** – Offer data, technical expertise, funding.
- **Healthcare Providers** – Deliver clinical services, collaborate on outreach.
- **Schools & Universities** – Platforms for health education and research.
- **Nonprofits & NGOs** –