

Lesson Eight:

Understanding Health and Social Advocacy

Objectives

1. To use Camara Jones' *Cliff Analogy* to review upstream causes of health.
2. To understand that efforts to improve the health of a community take place at the individual, service, and activism levels.
3. To review existing health advocacy efforts.

Outcomes

1. Students will review the upstream causes of health pathway.
2. Students will describe how advocacy strategies at the individual, service, and activism levels impact communities differently.
3. Students will use examples of local and national advocacy efforts as models for their own health advocacy projects.

Activities

Students will participate in the following three activities:

1. *Upstream Causes Analogy*
2. *Health and Social Advocacy Continuum*
3. *Health and Social Advocacy Review*

Activity 1: Upstream Causes Analogy

Purpose

The purpose of the *Upstream Causes Analogy* activity is to use Camara Jones' Cliff Analogy to review upstream causes of health.

Required Materials

The *Upstream Causes Analogy* requires the following material:

1. Camara Jones' *Cliff Analogy* article:

CP Jones, CY Jones, Perry, Barclay, and CA Jones. (2009). Addressing the social determinants of children's health: The cliff analogy. *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved*, 20 , 1-12. Retrieved from www.vdh.virginia.gov/healthpolicy/healthequity/documents/cliff-analogy.pdf.

Instructions

Follow the instructions below to implement the *Health and Social Advocacy Continuum* activity.

Prior to Class

1. **Review** Camara Jones' social determinants of health research, particularly her description of the cliff analogy, which is similar to the *Upstream Causes Story* described in *Lesson One*. Be prepared to describe and present the article's content to the class (using Jones' slideshow images and the Curriculum notes as a guide).

Camara Jones, MD, MPH, PhD, is an accomplished leader in the field of public health and an advocate for addressing the social determinants of health to promote health equity and reduce health disparities.

During Class



1. **Summarize** and discuss Camara Jones' *Cliff Analogy*.
2. Note the similarities between her cliff analogy and the *Upstream Causes Story* in *Lesson One*. **Read** the following take away message:

While it is possible to protect individuals by reacting to their health needs (such as providing ambulances or nets for people who fall off a cliff) it is more effective to investigate the root causes of problems (such as looking up to the cliff to see where and why people are falling). It is more equitable and likely to reduce disparities (because some individuals, for instance, may have no ambulances or torn nets) if entire populations are prevented from having poor health in the first place (such as moving everyone away from the cliff to avoid falling).

Prevention efforts for all populations are especially important, as all groups of people are at risk and deserve to have good health, not just those from certain population subgroups with access to resources (such as those with durable fences, up-to-date ambulances, or sturdy nets).

NOTE: While Camara Jones discusses racism and social and health inequities in her article, these concepts are complex and beyond the intent of this curriculum. We have simplified her message for this lesson.

Activity 2: Health and Social Advocacy Continuum

Purpose

The purpose of the *Health and Social Advocacy Continuum* activity is to illustrate different levels of social action, emphasizing that the greatest and most sustainable community improvements occur through activism and policy-level changes. In subsequent activities and lessons, students will address a health issue in their community at each level of the advocacy continuum (individual, service, activism).

Recommended Materials

The following materials are recommended (but not required) for the *Health and Social Advocacy Continuum* activity:

1. *Just Health Action* articles.

Gould, L, Mogford, E. & Devoght, A. (2010). Successes and challenges of teaching the social determinants of health in secondary schools: Case examples in Seattle, Washington. *Health Promotion Practice*, 11(3), Suppl, p26S-33.

Mogford, E., Gould, L. & Devoght, A. (2010). Teaching critical health literacy as a means to action on the social determinants of health. *Health Promotion International*. 10, 1093.

Instructions

Follow the instructions below to implement the *Health and Social Advocacy Continuum* activity.

Prior to Class

1. **Review** *Just Health Action's* articles to learn about the organization from which the *Health Advocacy Continuum* was adapted. *Just Health Action* is a Seattle-based non-profit organization that develops and implements multi-pronged educational initiatives to raise awareness about social determinants of health and reduce health disparities. The *Social Advocacy Continuum* has been adapted from their model.

During Class

1. Using the framework below, **describe** *Just Health Action's* three levels of social action: individual, service, and activism. The example describes how to enhance physical activity to help reduce health outcomes such as obesity, diabetes, and heart disease.

Level: Individual

Definition: Action that benefits yourself or a single person.

Example: One student exercises independently after school.

Level: Service

Definition: Action that benefits a small group.

Example: A consortium of high schools provides free intramural athletic programs for all interested students.

Level: Activism

Definition: Sustainable action that benefits a large group.

Example: State laws require schools to integrate physical activity breaks into regular academic schedules, such as five-minute breaks to stretch and walk at the start of each class. Instructors are held accountable by school administration to enforce these regulations.

2. **Divide** students into small groups, and assign each group a different issue related to health such as asthma, lead poisoning, substance abuse, unplanned pregnancy, or bullying.
3. **Instruct** students to brainstorm actions that address their assigned issue at each level of the advocacy continuum (individual, service, and activism). Students may record their responses in a similar format as the example below, and when finished will share results out loud with the class.

Sample Assigned Topic: Injury prevention, bicycle/skateboarding/scooter helmets on school campus.

| Individual | Service | Activism |
|---|--|---|
| <p>Wear a helmet when using a bicycle, skateboard, or scooter.</p> <p>Encourage a friend to wear a helmet by telling him/her that helmets can help prevent head injuries.</p> | <p>Collaborate with health instructors and school principal to offer educational classes for students that teach about the dangers of not wearing a helmet.</p> <p>Partner with a parent-teacher organization to raise and sustain funds to provide helmets at orientation to all incoming freshmen.</p> | <p>Enact school policies that require students who use bicycles, scooters, or skateboards on campus to wear a helmet.</p> <p>Monitor school personnel to ensure they enforce policies and cite people who do not wear a helmet.</p> |

Activity 3: Health and Social Advocacy Review

Purpose

1. The purpose of the *Health and Social Advocacy Review* activity is to help students brainstorm project ideas by having them discuss existing local and national health and social advocacy efforts.

Required Materials

The *Health and Social Advocacy Review* activity requires the following materials:

1. Print, web, or other media describing local or national advocacy actions by individuals or groups (collected by each student). For example:
 - a. A newspaper article highlights the growing number of overweight children and notes that a park with playgrounds and sports fields is not utilized to full capacity. It describes how local residents are trying to increase the use of the park by raising awareness about the available benefits of the park to community members. They distribute flyers to local schools and businesses, announcing that the park has safe places for children to play, fields for sports, paths for bicycling, and space that can be reserved for picnics and family gatherings.
 - b. A website shows an image of a convenience store located near the corner of a high school campus which has most windows covered by smoking and alcohol advertisements. It describes how students wrote letters to the store owner, the school principal, and the city council highlighting research studies that draw a connection between cigarette and alcohol advertisements and rates of substance use among youth. They requested that the advertisements be removed or at least be placed inside.
 - c. A television investigative team reports that toxic waste from a local chemical company is leaking into the community drinking water supply. They interview students who are collaborating with school and community leaders to develop a petition that explains the risks of drinking poor quality water, and demands that toxic waste be deposited in a safe place away from water supplies. They collect signatures of support from local residents, and submit the petition to the chemical company managers and city policy makers. They continue to place pressure on those decision-making entities until a healthy solution is reached.

Instructions

Follow the instructions below to implement the *Health and Social Advocacy Review* activity.

Prior to Class

1. **Instruct** each student to: 1) select an advocacy effort from newspaper or magazine articles, internet sites such as blogs, videos, and websites, or television or radio programs, and 2) bring in a copy of the advocacy effort (e.g., actual news article, printed blog entry) or write a few sentences describing the advocacy effort (e.g., written summary of a video or television segment).

During Class

1. **Collect** students' advocacy descriptions and redistribute one description to each student so that students do not receive their own description.
2. **Remind** students that advocacy is an essential step towards creating change in a community to improve health and reduce disparities. Changes can be accomplished through advocacy efforts at the individual, service, and activism levels by: 1) enhancing existing assets, 2) transforming barriers into assets, and/or 3) removing barriers that do not usually serve a positive or useful purpose. Students will conduct their own advocacy projects in a later lesson. The descriptions brought to class serve as examples of types of projects students may consider implementing.
3. **Instruct** students to read the description of the advocacy effort assigned to them and answer the following questions:
 - Which level(s) of advocacy (individual, service, or activism) are being addressed?
 - If only one aspect of advocacy is described, what action could take place to address the other levels of the advocacy continuum?
 - What aspect(s) of the advocacy project was most feasible and/or successful?
 - Suggest how a similar project could be implemented in your community.
4. In pairs, **instruct** students to briefly share the advocacy effort assigned to them and discuss corresponding advocacy levels (individual, service, activism).