

Public Health Advocacy Curriculum

This ten-lesson curriculum combines classroom- and community-based activities for high school students to learn about the upstream or root causes of health, and to become health advocates.

Developed by:

Nell Curran, MPH

Judith Ned, EdD, MEd

Marilyn Winkleby, PhD, MPH

Acknowledgements:

Cameron Henry – Cover Design

Alana Koehler – Editing

Dale Lemmerick – Design and Production

Erica Solway, PhD, MPH, MSW – Editing

Additional thanks to:

Natalia Baldwin

David deLeeuw

Lisa Henricksen, PhD

Sejal Parekh

Funding provided to the Stanford Medical Youth Science Program, Dr. Marilyn Winkleby, Principal Investigator, by:

Science Education Partnership Award (SEPA) Grant R25RR020611, from the National Center for Research Resources, a component of the National Institutes of Health

The HealthTrust

Information for Instructors

Background

This *Public Health Advocacy Curriculum* emphasizes the underlying social, economic, and political factors (i.e., upstream or root causes) that influence health and disease outcomes; recognizes how these factors affect populations differently; and stresses the importance of engaging in public health advocacy in one's community. It was developed in response to teachers who requested health curricula that extend beyond teaching about individual risk factors for disease, and is one of the only published set of lessons available on this topic.

Key Messages

The *Curriculum* is grounded in the following three key messages:

1. The health of an individual is embedded within a broad context. While individual health is largely shaped by a person's behaviors and genetics, social, economic and political factors known as upstream causes exert powerful – and often unrecognized – influences on health.
2. The health of a community is shaped by resources (goods and services) and policies, and when distributed unequally can contribute to health disparities. Resources and policies differ within and across communities. When such resources and policies are distributed unequally, health behaviors and outcomes of community residents can be affected, thus contributing to health disparities.
3. Students can address upstream causes and leverage assets within their communities to advocate for changes that improve the health of their communities.

Content

The *Curriculum* is comprised of ten modular lessons that combine classroom- and community-based experiential activities. They teach students about the broader context of health and provide opportunities to advocate for improved health conditions in their communities. Through inquiry-based activities and real-world projects, students practice academic skills (e.g., critical thinking, problem solving) and apply their learning to their personal circumstances.

Initial lessons blend articles, media analysis, debates, documentary screenings, and other activities to help students establish a foundational understanding of the upstream causes of health. Subsequent lessons allow students to explore their communities using PhotoVoice, mapping, and inventory research techniques to identify assets and barriers to health. To culminate their learning and observations, small groups of students develop and implement advocacy projects to address meaningful health issues facing their communities. Students then write a proposal to their local school board, city council, or other organization to suggest population-level and/or policy actions that could be taken to further expand and sustain their advocacy projects.

Additional Information

The *Curriculum* is flexible and easily modifiable. While it is advantageous to teach the curriculum in its entirety, lessons can be taught independently, and are adaptable to intact classrooms or after-school programs. Detailed directions are provided for instructors so that no additional training is necessary. Required supplies are listed at the beginning of each activity, and most can be obtained easily or at low-cost.

Thank you for your interest in the Public Health Advocacy Curriculum. We appreciate your role in shaping the next generation of youth who will learn about upstream causes of health and become advocates for change in their communities.

Public Health Advocacy Curriculum

Table of Contents

Upstream Causes

Lesson One: Introduction to Health

Activity 1: Health Case Scenarios	1.3
Activity 2: Upstream Causes Story and Flow Chart	1.7
Activity 3: <i>Unnatural Causes</i> Documentary	1.11

Lesson Two: Food Availability, Obesity, and Diabetes

Activity 1: How Sweet It Is: Sugary Beverages	2.3
Activity 2: Portion Sizes on the Rise	2.7
Activity 3: Policies to Address Obesity: A Debate	2.11
Activity 4: Diabetes Detectives: A Case Study of Upstream Causes of Health	2.15

Lesson Three: Environmental Hazards and Regulatory Measures

Activity 1: Health in the News	3.3
Activity 2: Speaking Out: Writing Advocacy Letters	3.7

Lesson Four: Smoking, Drinking, and the Media

Activity 1: Becoming Media Savvy	4.3
Activity 2: Tobacco Companies Uncovered	4.5
Activity 3: Counter Messages: The American Legacy Foundation	4.7

Community Exploration

Lesson Five: Perceiving Communities through a Public Health Lens

Activity 1: Identifying Assets	5.3
Activity 2: Viewing a Community from Multiple Perspectives	5.7
Activity 3: The Perfect Neighborhood	5.11

Lesson Six: Identifying Community Assets and Barriers

Activity 1: PhotoVoice	6.3
Activity 2: Asset Mapping	6.7
Activity 3: Community Inventory	6.11

Lesson Seven: Leveraging Community Assets and Overcoming Barriers

Activity 1: Results from PhotoVoice, Asset Mapping, and Community Inventory	7.3
Activity 2: Compilation of Assets and Barriers to Health	7.7
Activity 3: Social Advocacy Brainstorm	7.9

Public Health Advocacy

Lesson Eight: Understanding Health and Social Advocacy

Activity 1: Upstream Causes Analogy	8.3
Activity 2: Health and Social Advocacy Continuum	8.5
Activity 3: Health and Social Advocacy Review	8.9

Lesson Nine: From Start to Finish: Health Disparities Advocacy Projects

Activity 1: Health Advocacy Projects	9.3
--------------------------------------	-----

Lesson Ten: Upstream Causes and Health Advocacy Review

Activity 1: Upstream Causes Pathway	10.3
Activity 2: Students' Reflections	10.7