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.

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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 that 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.
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