Being an Influencer for Social Policy

An injury prevention perspective

Outline of Document

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide a guide for stakeholders to see their role in influencing social policy that supports injury prevention. This document defines social policy, its importance and connection to injury prevention, outlines examples of activities that can influence social policy in injury prevention, as well as provides overall supporting documents and definitions.

What is Social Policy?

A policy is a set of statements or commitments that outline courses of action to address a given problem or interrelated set of problems.[1] Social policies focus on issues and actions that affect the quality of life and well-being of individuals.[2]

Social policy can take on many different forms.[3] For the purpose of this document, we define social policy as covering a range of supports (such as programs, benefits, policies, legislation, and other resources) that act to protect people through various life changes that can affect their health. These policies function as a social safety net to ensure people are not negatively impacted by these life changes. Examples of social policies in Canada include universal health care, home-care programs, social assistance, retirement pensions, and more.[4]

Overview

We know the determinants of health influence the health of the population. We also know systemic barriers prevent people from reaching their full health potential.[5] Social policies can contribute to improving the conditions under which people live, work, and play – contributing to safer and adequate environments and lifestyles including improved housing, childcare, transportation, and personal social and health services.
We want this document to help stakeholders in identifying examples of the types of activities they can influence that are directly or indirectly related to social policy. Recognizing opportunities for social policy can further enhance collective efforts in addressing all serious injuries across the region.

Background and Context

The Atlantic Collaborative on Injury Prevention (ACIP) is a non-profit organization of injury prevention representatives from both government and non-governmental agencies. Working together, ACIP provides evidence-based policy advice and support to governments, non-governmental organizations, and other interested agencies from across Atlantic Canada in efforts to reduce the burden of injury across the region. One of the core components of ACIP's work is addressing the social determinants of health as they relate to injury prevention. In 2011, ACIP released a report titled "The Social Determinants of Injury". This report provided injury prevention practitioners and policymakers with an overview of the social and economic factors that contribute to injuries.

Along with the Social Determinants of Injury (2011) report, and ACIP's focus on fall-related injuries among seniors as a priority for Atlantic Canada, ACIP developed the document titled "Seniors' Fall Prevention and the Social Determinants of Health: A Social Policy Lens", released in May 2019. This document helped bring

awareness to the prominent social policy links between the social determinants of health and fall prevention among seniors so that current and future interventions could take these links into consideration.

In November 2019, ACIP partnered with Child Safety Link to host a webinar that expanded on the initial work of ACIP's (2019) report to include a focus on all ages. Child Safety Link (CSL) is an injury prevention program at the IWK Health Centre dedicated to reducing the incidence and severity of unintentional injury to children and youth in the Maritimes. The webinar was an opportunity to engage stakeholders (who work in fall prevention) to reflect and discover ways in which social policies can address the links between the social determinants of health (SDOH) and fall-related injuries across the lifespan.

Following the webinar, ACIP and CSL conducted a survey to better understand the challenges and barriers related to social policy faced by stakeholders. Based on the survey results, many individuals and/or their organizations did not realize they were currently conducting activities related to social policy, while some believed they did not have the capacity or tools to influence social policy in their work. An action arising from this webinar was to develop a knowledge exchange product to provide examples of influencing social policy as a starting point.

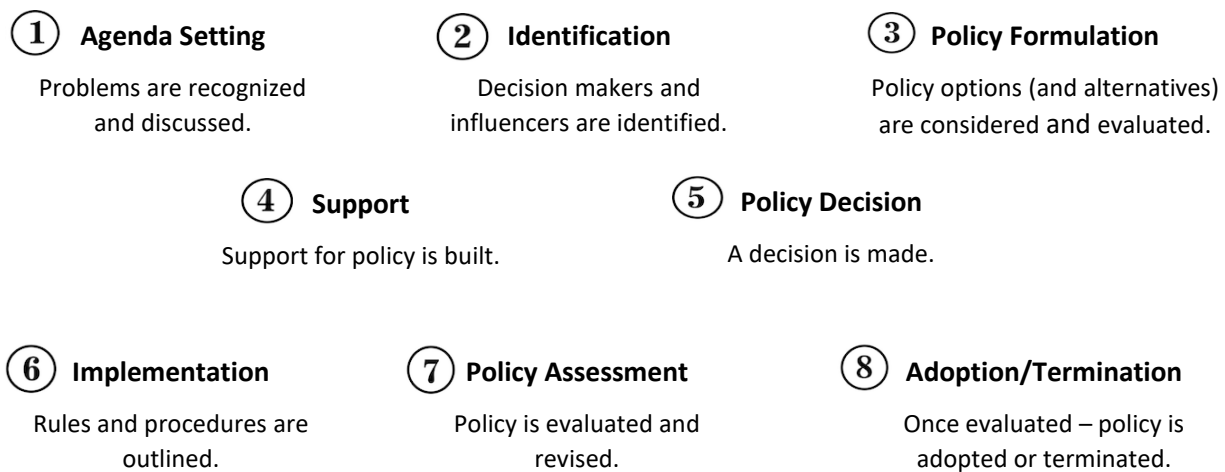## HOW DO I KNOW IF I CAN INFLUENCE SOCIAL POLICY? QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- Are you passionate about the issue at hand?
- Do you have evidence to support your position?
- Can you relay your point of view with confidence and in simple language?
- Do you have the support of your organization?
- Is your solution clearly defined?
- Is this the right time to act?
- Can you advocate for your position in 30 seconds?
- Do you work with or participate on local committees?
- Do you have a social media platform? Do you engage often with your social media audience?
- Do you deliver services such as tax credits, social services, grant applications, etc.?
- Have you ever developed a position statement?
- Do you have access to injury prevention or SDOH data?
- Do you have experience speaking with media? Being a spokesperson?
- Do you have existing relationships with government?
- Do you have resources available to support the development of a social policy (e.g., funding, staff, etc.)?
- Are there other partners that you or your organization can collaborate with?

Why is Social Policy Important for Injury Prevention?

Social policy initiatives can reduce injuries by improving social and economic conditions, enabling individuals to increase control over, and to improve various aspects of their health.[6] This can increase the effectiveness of other public health/injury prevention and health-care strategies. For example, individuals will be more receptive to education programs about an injury issue if their basic needs are being met (i.e., they have safe housing or are receiving a liveable income).[7]

How is Social Policy Created?

We have drawn on several different policy process models to demonstrate how social policy can be created. High-level, social policy development can look like the following:[8]

① **Agenda Setting**
Problems are recognized and discussed.

② **Identification**
Decision makers and influencers are identified.

③ **Policy Formulation**
Policy options (and alternatives) are considered and evaluated.

④ **Support**
Support for policy is built.

⑤ **Policy Decision**
A decision is made.

⑥ **Implementation**
Rules and procedures are outlined.

⑦ **Policy Assessment**
Policy is evaluated and revised.

⑧ **Adoption/Termination**
Once evaluated – policy is adopted or terminated.

How Can Stakeholders Influence Social Policies?

Social policy occurs through the collective action of many different stakeholders. Each stakeholder can bring diverse skills and knowledge to activities throughout various stages of the policy process such as mobilizing resources (i.e., funding), setting the research agenda, knowledge translation, mobilizing communities, generating, and disseminating evidence, bringing awareness to and the promotion of policies – among others.[9] *See the section titled "Supporting Documents" for examples of a policy process which can be applied to social policy*.

Influence is important to achieving any degree of wide-spread change with a particular issue or cause. To be influential, stakeholders must first see themselves as capable of having the capacity to influence existing and future social policy activities. *See Influencer definition in the text box.[10]*

Roles and responsibilities of individual stakeholders in being an "influencer" to social policy will vary depending on professional scope and position.[9] The following is an outline of injury prevention stakeholders and potential activities that can influence social policy efforts. *Note: this document does not describe all possible activities and/or ways to influence social policy efforts. Rather, this document establishes an ongoing way for stakeholders to reflect and to consider how they can influence social policy directly or indirectly.*

> **INFLUENCER:**
>
> Being an influencer is achieved through the promotion, knowledge, collaboration, support, or involvement with a range of people, organizations, sectors, and institutions. Stakeholders each have their own unique level of influence based on these characteristics.

How Stakeholders Can Influence Social Policies - EXAMPLES

STAKEHOLDER(S)	DESCRIPTION OF INFLUENCE	SAMPLE ACTIVITIES THAT SUPPORT SOCIAL POLICY [5,3,11]
Family Resource Centers **Front Line Public Health Staff (nurses, home care workers, community facilitators, etc.)**	Provide a vital link to individuals, families, and organizations in local communities.	• Develop and maintain meaningful community partnerships and networks to increase collaboration and understanding of community issues. • Translate understanding of individual/family issues into suggestions for policy change at a population level. • Use social media platforms to draw attention to important injury prevention issues. • Communicate with key audiences about social policy opportunities (i.e., tax credit and other benefits available to these key audiences).
Managers **Health Care Specialists (in clinical or non-clinical settings)** **Injury Prevention Specialists**	Assist with the identification and action on injury prevention priorities. Provide support to staff to develop approaches for injury prevention initiatives. May have a leadership role in planning and decision-making processes.	• Identify local injury prevention issues connected to social policies through daily operations and community partners. • Provide content and process expertise to advocacy actions. • Facilitate dialogue within their organization to support policy action. • Develop, initiate, and contribute to background documents, including position statements where applicable, in an effort to increase understanding and awareness within departments/organizations both internally and externally. • Share expertise and evidence on injury prevention and social determinants of health issues through government and stakeholder engagement activities (i.e., through committees). • Identify trends and interpret epidemiological data on injuries.
Directors/Executive Members	Leadership role in planning and decision-making processes. Assist with the identification and action on injury prevention priorities.	• Work with communication teams and other stakeholders to engage in timely, proactive communications activities such as op-eds, letters to editors, articles, or media briefs in their injury prevention areas of expertise. • Support the development of organizational position statements (internally). • Endorse social policy approaches through activities such as position statements in external communications. • Be available to communication teams (media relations) to comment on social policy-related issues in their areas of injury prevention expertise.

		• Coordinate resources and collaborative efforts to advocate for social policy more effectively. • Encourage and support organizational capacity building on advocacy and social policy.
Physicians	Provide credibility to injury prevention issues and initiatives. Assist with the identification and action on injury prevention priorities.	• Work with communication teams and other stakeholders to engage in timely, proactive communications activities such as op-eds, letters to editors, articles, or media briefs in their injury prevention areas of expertise. • Support the development of organizational position statements (internally). • Endorse social policy approaches through activities such as position statements in external communications. • Be available to communication teams (media relations) to comment on social policy-related issues in their areas of injury prevention expertise. • Encourage and support organizational capacity building on advocacy and social policy.
Researchers	Provide a link to data and academic settings to research injury prevention issues, patterns, etc. to inform initiatives and to evaluate social policy work.	• Identify trends and interpret epidemiological data on injuries. • Support evaluation of social policy work by monitoring the policy development, process, and results.
Non-Government Organizations	Act as a bridge between government and the public. Provide a venue for collaboration and the sharing of knowledge and awareness. Champion the vision, principles, and outcomes of social policies.	• Provide human or financial resources to support advocacy actions for social policies. • Develop organizational position statements. • Provide evidence/context or expertise on specific injury prevention issues to support policy implementation. • Provide access to the target audience. • Establish partnerships with organizations in other jurisdictions and learn from each other's experiences. • Establish direct relationships with government. • Assess public and government readiness. • Develop, conduct, and support education and awareness campaigns. • Seek out possible social policy frameworks in provincial/municipal levels and connect with those stakeholders.

Government	Foster the development of a culture that promotes the vision, principles, and outcomes of a social policy framework.	**Municipal** • Deliver social services and social supports. • Promote and support current social policy frameworks. • Bring awareness to the availability of social policy initiatives to stakeholders and the public. **Provincial** • Set standards and legislate social policies. • Deliver social services and social supports. • Provide resources and supports to enhance capacity of social policy development and the promotion of social policy initiatives to the public (i.e., funding). • Promote current social policy frameworks. • Bring awareness to the availability of social policy initiatives to stakeholders and the public. **Federal** • Provide financial resources to the provinces. • Support and deliver programs and services (e.g., Old Age Security, Employment Insurance, and the Canada Child Tax Benefit). • Provide support on data collection for evaluating social policies. • Bring awareness to the availability of social policy initiatives to stakeholders and the public.
Donors	Provide financial resources to support social policy activities.	• Develop grant programs to support different levels of policy development and implementation. • Be willing to support policy activities – even in the absence of short-term tangible deliverables.
Media	Provide communication channels for stakeholders to disseminate information.	• Report on the evidence. • Help bring awareness to important issues. • Inspire/challenge audiences to act on important issues. • Highlight local champions and advocates.

Definition of Activities and Examples

ACTIVITY	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE(S)
Committees/coalitions (government and stakeholder engagement)	A small group of representatives (staff, organizations, community, etc.). Serve as a resource on a particular issue or topic. Purpose of committees may vary, some may include networking, exchanging ideas or providing advice.	Government may form a committee to look at a specific injury issue (such as road safety) that then provides advice back to government. (I.e., Nova Scotia Road Safety Advisory Committee).
Position statement	A position statement helps generate support on an issue. A position statement is generally used to inform a target audience of a stance that a specific organization or service has on an issue.	Writing a formal organizational position statement on an injury issue. (I.e., the Canadian Pediatric Society has a position statement on bicycle helmet use in Canada and the need for legislation to reduce the risk of head injury). *See the section titled "Supporting Documents" for a template of a position statement.*
Trends, data	A set of facts that demonstrates a relationship; a source of information.[12]	Collecting/gathering data from research studies, the literature, etc. and identifying the data patterns. This can be used to support the benefits of implementing or supporting a social policy. (I.e., data from the Canadian Institute for Health Information shows falls are the leading cause of hospitalization for Atlantic Canada. This data can be used to inform what injury issues an individual or organization should focus on).
Capacity building	Involves enhancing knowledge, developing skills, and enabling systems in which injury prevention efforts are supported.[13]	Training or professional development opportunities such as policy workshops, advocacy workshops, etc. (I.e., Canadian Injury Prevention Curriculum)
Advocacy	A series of actions (speaking, writing, etc.) intended to influence decision-making on a cause or issue and effect change.[12] Individuals, organizations, communities, or businesses can undertake advocacy.	Writing a letter to a government official demonstrating the importance of tax credits for home repairs to reduce hazards in the home – reducing these hazards can help prevent injuries.

Collaboration Partnerships	A working relationship among different groups/sectors for the purpose of taking action on an issue in a way that is more effective than working on that issue alone.[12] Working together to achieve a common goal.[12]	Working with representatives from other sectors, such as community services, to ensure transportation needs are considered in injury prevention and social policy.
Evidence	Information used to inform decision-making. Examples of evidence can include analyzed data, published research findings, results of evaluations, prior experience, expert opinions. These pieces can be used alone or be combined in various ways.[12]	Literature reviews, evaluation results of social policies, etc. used to demonstrate the importance of an issue or the importance of actions to address it.
Evaluation	An effort(s) to determine the effectiveness and impact of an activity, initiative, etc. in relation to the activity's objectives and resources used.[12]	Evaluating social policies against indicators for injury prevention.
Briefing note	A short document that provides a framework to analyze a problem, examine the options for action, and offer recommendations.[14]	Writing a briefing note to government officials on the importance of social policy for injury prevention issues.
Op-Ed	An article based on an opinion, usually featured in a newspaper or magazine.[15]	Writing an op-ed for a local newspaper to raise awareness of an injury issue to the community.
Setting the research agenda	Identifying an injury issue and gathering evidence to indicate the magnitude of the issue.[16]	Recognizing a number of pedestrian and vehicle collisions at a crosswalk. Connecting with local police to gather collision data to support a crosswalk intervention.
Knowledge translation	Combining, exchanging, and applying information/knowledge by stakeholders to relevant audiences.[17] Knowledge translation helps synthesize research and evidence into key messages for communicating to the public, decision-makers, other stakeholders, etc.	Creating infographics for communicating key messages on an injury issue to the public or stakeholders.
Mobilizing resources or communities	The process of creating partnerships with different parts of the community to focus on and address an injury issue. Mobilization helps empower community members to take action and facilitate change. Mobilization efforts involve disseminating information and finding necessary resources to support the cause (I.e., funding or grant partnerships).[18]	Applying for a community grant with a local community organization, empowering them to create a local project addressing an injury issue.

Supporting Documents

Child Safety Link Advocacy Framework http://childsafetylink.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Advocacy-Framework-FINAL_WEB.pdf

Position Statement Template http://childsafetylink.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Advocacy-Framework-FINAL_WEB.pdf

National Collaborating Centre for Healthy Public Policy – example policy process: http://www.ncchpp.ca/docs/modeleetapespolpubliques_en.pdf

Centre for Disease Control – example policy process: https://www.cdc.gov/policy/analysis/process/docs/CDCPolicyProcess.pdf

About Us

Atlantic Collaborative on Injury Prevention

The Atlantic Collaborative on Injury Prevention (ACIP) is a partnership of injury prevention practitioners from both government and non-government organizations. ACIP provides leadership to prevent injuries and their impact on individuals and communities in Atlantic Canada. Priority areas include policy and advocacy; research and surveillance; sustainability and growth; and networking, partnerships, and knowledge exchange.

www.acip.ca

Child Safety Link

Child Safety Link (CSL) is an injury prevention program at the IWK Health Centre dedicated to reducing the incidence and severity of unintentional injury to children and youth in the Maritimes. CSL is committed to working with community organizations, governments, and other partners to ensure children are as safe as necessary at home, on the road, and at play.

 www.childsafetylink.ca

References

1. Wolf, R. (2000). Definition of policy analysis, Queen's University, School of Policy Studies.
2. City of London, Department of Community Services, Social Research and Planning. (2006). City of London Social Policy Framework. Online Guide to Social Policy in Ontario https://www.london.ca/About-London/community-statistics/social-issues/Documents/social_policy_framework.pdf
3. Government of Alberta. (2013). Alberta's social policy framework. Retrieved online from https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/e269764d-e3ed-431c-9db3-b65073cc6e51/resource/998e15a5-c992-4a61-b6b4-2957eb6227d6/download/6214203-2013-albertas-social-policy-framework-2013-02-28.pdf
4. Atlantic Collaborative on Injury Prevention. (2011). The social determinants of injury.
5. Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. (2017). Health public policy toolkit: Advocacy.
6. Provincial Health Services Authority (2011). Towards Reducing Health Inequities: A health system approach to chronic disease prevention. A discussion paper. Vancouver, BC: Population & Public Health, Provincial Health Services Authority. Retrieved online from http://www.bccdc.ca/pop-public-health/Documents/TowardsReducingHealthInequitiesFinalDiscussionPape.pdf
7. Pike, I., Richmond, S., Rothman, L. & Macpherson, A. (2015). Canadian Injury Prevention Resource. Toronto, ON: Parachute. Retrieved online from: http://www.parachutecanada.org/downloads/research/Canadian_Injury_Prevention_Resource-LR.pdf
8. Benoit, F. (2013). Public Policy Models and Their Usefulness in Public Health: The Stages Model. Montréal, Québec: National Collaborating Centre for Healthy Public Policy.
9. Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. (2017). Healthy public policy toolkit: Understanding & engaging in healthy public policy.
10. Yphantides, N., Escoboza, S. & Macchione, N. (2015). Leadership In public health: New competencies for the future. *Front Public Health*, *3*(24). Retrieved online from https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4341427/
11. Nabyonga Orem, J., Marchal, B., & Mafigiri, D. et al. (2013). Perspectives on the role of stakeholders in knowledge translation in health policy development in Uganda. *BMC Health Services Research, 13*, (324). Retrieved online from https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/1472-6963-13-324#citeas
12. Public Health Agency of Canada. (2017). Glossary of terms. Government of Canada. Retrieved online from https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/public-health-practice/skills-online/glossary-terms.html
13. World Health Organization. (2020). Capacity building. *Violence and Injury Prevention*. Retrieved online from https://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/capacitybuilding/en/
14. Doyle, S. (2013). How to write a briefing note. Retrieved online from http://web.uvic.ca/~sdoyle/E302/Notes/WritingBriefingNotes.html. Cited in Public Health Ontario. (2018). Supporting the policy making process. Retrieved online from https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/supporting-policy-making.pdf?la=en
15. Meriam-Webster. (2020). Op-ed. Learner's Dictionary. Retrieved online from http://www.learnersdictionary.com/definition/op-ed
16. National Collaborating Centre for Healthy Public Policy. (2013). Public policy models and their usefulness in public health: The stages model. Briefing Note. Retrieved online from http://www.ncchpp.ca/docs/modeleetapespolpubliques_en.pdf
17. World Health Organization. (2020). Knowledge translation. Ageing and life course. Retrieved online from https://www.who.int/ageing/projects/knowledge_translation/en/
18. Huberman, B., Klaus, T. & Davis, L. (2014). Strategies guided by best practice for community mobilization. Advocates for Youth. Retrieved online from https://advocatesforyouth.org/resources/health-information/strategies-guided-by-best-practice-for-community-mobilization/