

## **Best practice – a population health approach**

Research has shown that individual characteristics, social and economic factors and the physical environment are all important in determining health. These factors interact in ways that may result in either positive or negative health outcomes.<sup>1</sup>

The population health approach is based on research that has come forth over the last twenty years, and provides compelling new evidence that socio-economic and environmental factors have a great influence on the health status and well being of populations, sub-groups of populations and individuals. Improvements in the health of a population depends on how effectively these factors are incorporated into health policy and action.<sup>2</sup>

A population health approach aims to maintain and improve the health status of the entire population. The key elements of a population health approach include:

- A focus on the health of populations with efforts aimed at promoting health for the entire population or large sub-populations, such as youth.
- Consideration of the full range of factors that influence health (determinants of health).
- The use of information from a variety of sources to assess the health of the population, identify priorities for action, and develop strategies that improve health to support evidence-based decisions.
- An increase in upstream investments that consider the root causes of illness and conditions that create health.

- The application of multiple strategies in multiple settings to improve the health of the population.
- The use of a collaborative approach that engages multiple partners from various sectors to ensure the possibility of taking action across the determinants of health.
- The employment of mechanisms for public involvement to provide citizens with meaningful opportunities to participate in developing and implementing priorities for action to improve health.<sup>3</sup>

## References

1. A Best Practices Approach to Health Promotion Framework, 2002.
2. Creative Spice: Learning From Communities About Putting The Population Health Approach Into Action, Health Canada, Population and Public Health Branch, BC/Yukon Region, December, 2001
3. Healthy People, Healthy Communities: Using the Population Health Approach in Nova Scotia, Nova Scotia Department of Health, Public Health Services, 2001.