



## What Are the Health Promoter Competencies?

The Health Promoter Competencies describe what health promoters are expected to be capable of doing to work effectively, efficiently, and appropriately in the field of health promotion. The set of Health Promoter Competencies is a framework for health promoters and others who use health promotion as an approach to improve health, health equity and the determinants of health.

### Health Promotion

The policies and processes that enable people to increase control over and improve their health. These address the needs of the population as a whole in the context of their daily lives, rather than focusing on people at risk for specific diseases, and are directed toward action on the determinants or causes of health. Health promotion is action oriented and based on public policies to enable, support and protect health.

Source: Last J, ed. A Dictionary of Public Health. 2007.

## Why Were the Competencies Developed?

The Health Promoter Competencies were developed in response to the increasing demand for practitioners with the knowledge, abilities, skills and values necessary to address the increasing complexity of health issues and burden of chronic diseases, the concern for health inequities, and the recognition of the importance of healthy public policies and creating supportive environments for health. In addition, the Health Promoter Competencies were developed to address several systemic challenges including: misunderstanding of the role and best use of health promoter positions; a lack of consistency in health promotion position descriptions; and, a need to better align training programs and continuing education with workforce needs.

In response, the Health Promoter Competencies are intended to:

- Increase understanding of the range of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values for health promotion practice that are needed to plan, implement, and evaluate health promotion action.
- Inform competency-based job descriptions and performance appraisal processes for health promoters.
- Inform health promotion training programs and continuing education.
- Inform health promoters' career planning and decision-making regarding professional development and training needs.
- Contribute to greater recognition and validation of the value of health promotion and the work done by health promotion practitioners.



## Who Are the Competencies For?

These competencies are designed for use by health promotion practitioners, those that manage them, and academic institutions that provide education and training for health promoters.

Position titles and practice contexts vary considerably across the country. In developing these competencies, the perspective taken is that a health promotion practitioner is someone whose main role and function is health promotion. As such, these competencies are designed to be relevant to all practitioners whose main role reflects the Ottawa Charter's strategies and actions (see text box). This includes not only those working in public health-related governmental and non-governmental organizations, but also potentially to other health and non-health based organizations, including those that may not identify as a health promoter.

Health promoters apply combinations of several approaches to support improved health:

- develop advanced knowledge of health and its determinants.
- analyse complex issues regarding how health is created and how health behaviours are brought about.
- think strategically and work for strategic change, which often calls for a level of influence and leadership beyond the authority and status of many health promotion posts.
- champion ways of working based on evidence of effectiveness, theory and clear ethical principles.
- commit to working with thoroughness and in ways which involve people and encourage participation. Rather than becoming the expert on which others come to depend, the health promoter is committed to building capacity and skills in others to do health promotion themselves.<sup>1</sup>

As a core public health function, health promotion-related competencies are included within the **Core Competencies for Public Health in Canada**. In other words, all public health practitioners are expected to possess health promotion-related competencies. However, for individuals whose main role and function is health promotion, there is a greater depth and breadth of expectations for health promotion-related competencies. The Health Promoter Competencies therefore build and expand upon

### Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion

#### Strategies:

- Advocate for conditions favourable to health
- Enable people to achieve their full health potential
- Mediate between differing interests in society for the pursuit of health.

#### Actions:

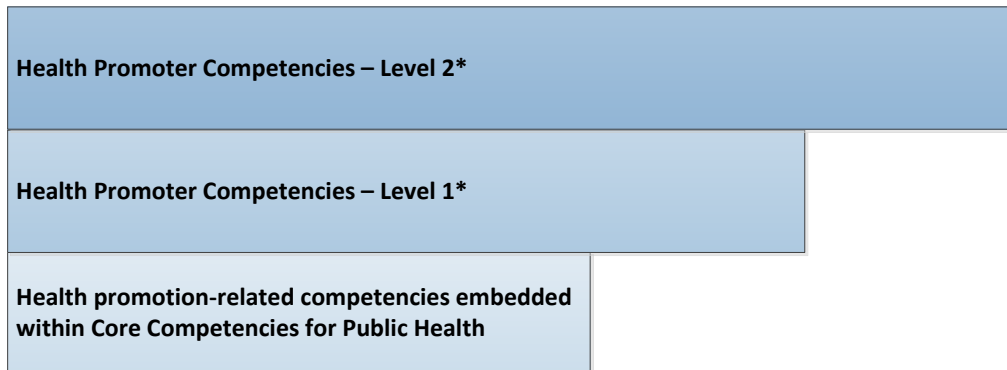
- Build healthy public policy
- Create supportive environments
- Strengthen community action
- Develop personal skills
- Reorient health services.



the public health core competencies to provide greater detail regarding the knowledge, skills, abilities, and values necessary for health promotion practitioners (see Figure 1).

Recognizing that there are different levels of proficiency, Figure 1 shows two levels of Health Promoter Competencies. Further information on the distinguishing characteristics between levels of proficiency, as well as examples for each competency statement, are provided in a Health Promoter Position Profile located in the on-line toolkit. Sample position descriptions for both proficiency levels, as well as a side-by-side comparison between the Health Promoter Competencies and the Core Competencies for Public Health in Canada, are also included in the toolkit.

**Figure 1: The Health Promoter Competencies Build and Expand Upon the Core Competencies for Public Health**



\*Description of levels 1 and 2, as well as examples for each competency statement, may be found in the Health Promoter Position Profile located in the online toolkit.

## Core Values and Principles Underpinning the Health Promoter Competencies

As described in the Ottawa Charter, improvement in health requires a secure foundation in the basic prerequisites for health (see text box). How knowledge and skills are applied in health promotion is critical. The following core values and principles guide health promotion practice:

Prerequisites for Health – Ottawa Charter	
• peace	• income
• shelter	• a stable eco-system
• education	• sustainable resources
• food	• social justice and equity.

- a social-ecologic model of health that takes into account the cultural, economic, and social determinants of health.
- a commitment to equity, civil society and social justice.
- a respect for cultural diversity and sensitivity.



- a dedication to sustainable development.
- a participatory approach to engaging the population in identifying needs, setting priorities, and planning, implementing, and evaluating the practical and feasible health promotion solutions to address needs.<sup>2</sup>

## How Were the Competencies Developed?

The development of the Health Promoter Competencies began in 2006 with the preparation of a literature review, environmental scan and discussion paper resulting in a preliminary draft set of competencies in 2007.<sup>3</sup> While preliminary steps at consultation were begun in 2008, a series of consultations in four provinces were conducted in 2013-2015 to seek input on the competencies. Additional feedback was received through conference workshops, webinars, and online surveys. Recently published health promoter competency from Europe, Australia and New Zealand were also reviewed.

Improvements in the competency set were incorporated resulting in the final version comprised of 34 statements organized into 9 domains. While individual statements enable assessment and training of individual competencies, the statements are inter-dependent. The performance of a health promotion task will typically require the integration of competency statements from multiple domains.

## Supporting Information and Tools

A glossary of terms is provided following the list of competencies. To support the use of the Health Promoter Competencies, an online toolkit has been developed, which will be of potential interest to practitioners, their managers and academic institutions. The competency-based tools include, but are not limited to, sample position descriptions, interview question examples, and a self-assessment tool.

## References

<sup>1</sup> NHS Careers. Health promotion specialist. Available at: <http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/explore-by-career/wider-healthcare-team/careers-in-the-wider-healthcare-team/corporate-services/health-promotion-specialist/>.

<sup>2</sup> Allegrante et al. Domains of core competency, standards, and quality assurance for building global capacity in health promotion: The Galway Consensus Conference Statement. *Health Educ Behav* 2009; 36(3):476-482.

<sup>3</sup> These reports and additional background information regarding the Health Promoter Competencies may be found at: [www.healthpromotioncanada.ca](http://www.healthpromotioncanada.ca).