



STEP 4: ADVOCATE



Helping your patients on an individual basis is a great start to creating a healthier community. But, sometimes there isn't a strong enough support network and patients find themselves back in the same unhealthy living conditions. Yet you can advocate to strengthen these networks and encourage the community to do more for its residents.

This can be achieved by involving the leaders of the community, from government officials and religious leaders to business owners and charitable organisations. Help identify champions within the community who can aid you in building better and healthier environments for your patients.

HOW TO INFLUENCE CHANGE:

- ➔ Get involved in local community development
- ➔ Start talking with influential people and community leaders
- ➔ Raise awareness on how social conditions are harming your patients
- ➔ Partner with local support resources and advocacy groups
- ➔ Join intersectoral committees to find shared solutions to local problems
- ➔ Use case studies and success stories to help motivate change
- ➔ Be part of a larger social movement to create supportive environments for health

THE CLEAR TOOLKIT

Training frontline health workers to ask about and act upon the social causes underlying poor health

The purpose of this toolkit is to empower and educate health workers on how to address the social causes of poor health.

When caring for patients, you will often see the same kinds of health issues appearing again and again within the community. Instead of providing a "quick fix," what more can be done to prevent these health problems in the first place?

Many health problems often have the same underlying causes related to daily living conditions and circumstances at home, including: poverty, hunger, isolation, abuse and discrimination.

Using the four-step process in this toolkit will help you to identify the underlying causes of the conditions you treat regularly. Together you and your colleagues can work to make your community a better and healthier place by starting to ask about and act upon the underlying social causes of poor health.

- 1 TREAT
- 2 ASK
- 3 REFER
- 4 ADVOCATE



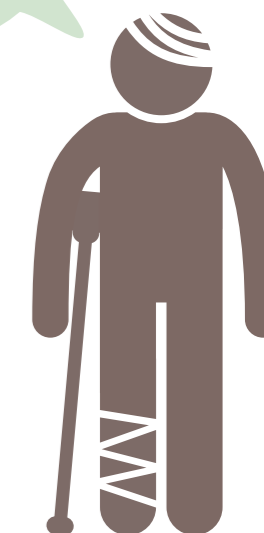
STEP 1: TREAT

Of course, your primary role is to treat and care for patients. Nonetheless, while treating patients, there are some questions you can ask them. These will help you and your colleagues get a better idea of why we keep seeing the same conditions, and what we can do to reduce the likelihood of them happening again. Once you have asked the questions you can refer patients to the right places and people in your local community so that they can get the support they need.

You may think that some of the causes of illness are intimidating and difficult to deal with, but you do not have to solve all of these problems on your own. Using this toolkit will help you connect your patients with other resource-persons like yourself for added help and support.

REMEMBER TO:

- Be attentive and listen
- Be respectful and empathetic
- Be compassionate and understanding
- Build trust and security
- Be thoughtful of the wider context
- Be accessible and open
- Be aware of cultural heritage
- Be tolerant of what you may hear





STEP 2: ASK

Asking the right questions in the right way will help you identify underlying problems in order to refer your patients to the right place. Remember that many patients may be frightened and overwhelmed by their situation and may not know where to even begin to find help.

When you ask questions, asking them in a respectful and friendly manner is more likely to get helpful clear answers. Ensure you ask in a safe and secure environment as this will enable the patient to answer more openly.

EXAMPLE QUESTIONS:

Do household members have stable work with safe working conditions?

Who cares for your children while household members are working?

Are school-aged children able to regularly attend school?

Is there always enough to eat at home?

Do you and your family have a safe and clean place to sleep?

Do you feel safe at home?

Do you have any concerns about your children's safety?

Do you ever feel pressured, bullied or intimidated?

Do you have friends or family to depend on in times of need?



STEP 3: REFER

After you have provided patients with initial treatment, and have been able to ask them about their circumstances, you will have a better idea of the challenges that they face.

Some of these challenges may seem insurmountable, but you are not alone in helping to solve their problems. You are in an ideal position to refer your patients to local resources and support networks, that they may not be aware of and that could help them improve their life circumstances.

EXAMPLE REFERRALS:



Job centre, employment skills retraining, apprenticeship program.



Child care cooperatives, early childhood development programs, neighborhood-run daycares



School boards, ministry of education office, child rights agencies



Food banks, soup kitchens, community gardens



Housing rights advocacy groups, rental board



Women's shelters, women's support groups, telephone hotline for victims of domestic violence



Youth protection services, police department, public curator's office



Legal aid clinics, human rights organizations, cultural community support groups



Support groups, religious organizations, neighborhood networks

