

Mental Health Equity | Flip Sheet

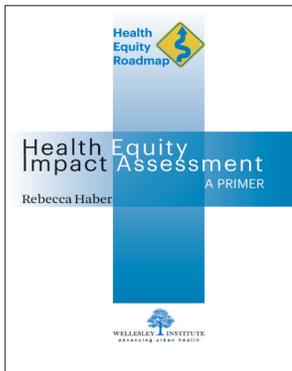
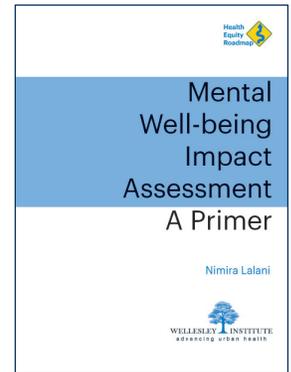
March 1, 2011

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Mental Well-being Impact Assessment (January 2011)

In this time of economic turmoil and upheaval with its consequent assaults on our mental health, it seems more important than ever to acknowledge the importance of mental health to our collective well-being, to the health of society and our economy. To advance population mental health will require mental health to be everyone's business, to be mainstreamed into the non-health sectors (which have the most important effect on our health) and to be appropriately considered, documented and resourced.

Like health more broadly, the determinants of mental health are largely social and economic: they lie in the decisions that are made about employment, housing, income distribution, and education, for example, which determine how and how long we live our lives.



Health Equity Impact Assessment (December, 2010)

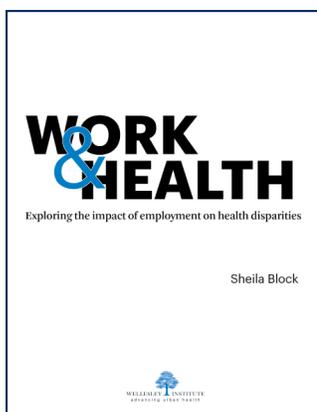
Health Equity Impact Assessment (HEIA) is a tool used to analyze a new program or policy's potential impact on health disparities and/or on health disadvantaged populations. It is an adaptation of health impact assessment (HIA) with an explicit focus on equity. Health inequalities are pervasive in Ontario and around the globe.

In Ontario, for example, people with low incomes report their health to be poor or fair at a rate three times that of people with high income. People with higher incomes live longer with better quality of life than people with low incomes. The same gradients are found for particular conditions, and health outcomes can be worse for specific populations including Aboriginals, recent immigrants, women, and remote communities. (See resource below for more detail.)

Evidence-Based Planning Tools: Health Equity Impact Assessment

To drive health equity into action we need to understand the needs of health disadvantaged populations, identify barriers to equitable access to quality care, and build equity into priority setting, resource allocation and performance management. That means we need a repertoire of effective equity-focused planning tools. HEIA is one key tool that analyzes the potential impact of service, program or policy changes on health disparities and/or health disadvantaged populations. It can help to plan new services or initiatives, assess and re-align existing programs, and build awareness of equity within organizations.

Link: http://www.torontocentralhin.on.ca/uploadedFiles/Home_Page/Report_and_Publications/Health%20Equity%20Discussion%20Paper%20v1.0.pdf



Work and Health: exploring the impact of employment on health disparities (December 2010)

Our working lives are an essential contributor to what keeps us healthy and what makes us sick. This paper explores the linkages between labour market policies, employment conditions, working conditions and health disparities. It discusses evidence on the impact of these factors on health outcomes. Finally, it outlines next steps the Wellesley Institute will be taking to further our understanding of the relationship between labour market policies, labour market outcomes and population health, and to advocate for policies that will reduce labour market inequality.

The Wellesley Institute will be further exploring the impact labour market policies, conditions, and outcomes have on population health. It will be working with partners to advocate for pragmatic policy solutions that will advance population health through improvements in labour market equity.



Recovery Through the Lens of Cultural Diversity (Spring 2010)

Many provincial mental health system reform bodies in Ontario have endorsed the concept of recovery. Increasingly, community mental health organizations in Toronto are seeking to align their policies and practices with a recovery vision and principles.

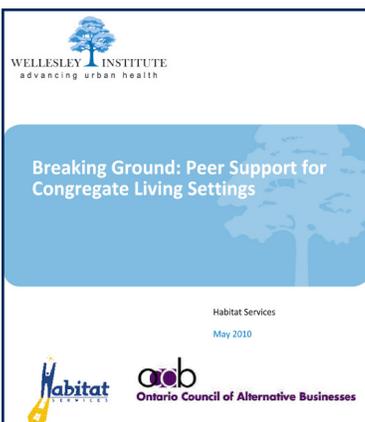
The overall aims of this project were to examine recovery through a cultural diversity lens in order to develop a model of recovery that, when implemented, will improve the ability of mental health organizations to design and deliver recovery-oriented services that are relevant and responsive to culturally diverse Toronto.

Drugs, Homelessness and Health: homeless youth speak out about harm reduction (Spring 2010)

The purpose of the report is to present the results of a harm reduction needs assessment survey among the most at-risk homeless youth in Toronto, identify barriers to appropriate health services, and based on the youth's voices, make recommendations, and advocate for better programs to serve this vulnerable population.

Youth who are homeless in Toronto face many challenges, from meeting basic needs to navigating our complex service system, to finding housing and other supports to help stabilize their lives.

The voices of youth are central to this report as they are the best storytellers of their own lives and experiences. The voices are clear and candid, creative and courageous. These are the voices that governments, funders, policy makers and service providers must listen to if we want to make progress in improving the lives and brightening the futures of this under-served group of youth in our community.



Breaking Ground: peer support for congregate living settings (October, 2010)

Habitat Services conducted a community-based research project with funding from the Wellesley Institute and support from Ontario Council of Alternative Businesses (OCAB) and Parkdale Activity and Recreation Centre (PARC), in order to uncover recommendations about peer support work in congregate living settings. Within the continuum of supportive housing for individuals with serious mental health issues, boarding home tenants are particularly disadvantaged by income, lack of privacy, few opportunities to exercise autonomy, and social exclusion. Providing peer support — informal support from individuals with personal experience navigating the mental health system, is one strategy to address health disparities and improve the quality of life of boarding home tenants in a way that promotes empowerment and provides hope for recovery.

The Wellesley Institute is a Toronto-based non-profit and non-partisan research and policy institute. Our focus is on developing research and community-based policy solutions to the problems of urban health and health disparities.

