

# ADVOCACY FOR SOCIAL CHANGE: ROLE OF THE CHN

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# OUTLINE OF 'NETWORK CAFÉ'

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- Overview of the role of advocacy for social change in community health nursing
- Share stories of advocacy for social change
- Identify strategies to strengthen role of advocacy for social change among CHNs and to support those CHNs who are engaged in this role

# DEFINING “ADVOCACY”

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“Advocacy: Interventions such as speaking, writing or acting in favour of a particular cause, policy or group of people....Advocacy often aims to enhance the health of disadvantaged groups...” [PHAC, 2007, *Core Competencies*, p.9]

- ❖ Often used synonymously with ‘lobbying,’ which involves attempting to persuade a politician or influential person to support or oppose changes in the law. Public health advocacy may involve lobbying but it is a much broader strategy than that.

# SUPPORT FOR CHN ROLE IN ADVOCACY FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

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- Strong *theoretical* support for expanding role of CHN to social change agent/social activist
  - Commitment to ‘emancipatory ethic’ (Falk-Rafael, 2005a; VanderPlaat, 2002)
  - ‘Critical caring’ (Falk-Rafael, 2005b)
  - Policy advocacy re: social equity (Daiski, 2005)
  - ‘Bringing about social change’ to address child & family poverty (Blackburn, 1992; Cohen & Reutter, 2007)

# SUPPORT FOR CHN ROLE (cont'd)

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- 'Bringing about social change' involves working for changes to team, organizational, and government policies with the goal of reducing or eliminating poverty, social exclusion, or other social inequities
- Important role for C/PHNs [some examples]:
  - Initiate public discussion of health effects of poverty; how public policies can lock families into poverty
  - Use media to increase awareness
  - Get family poverty on agenda of health organization and their professional organizations

# SUPPORT FOR CHN ROLE IN ADVOCACY (cont'd)

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- Strong *professional/regulatory* support
  - International level:
    - advocacy for anti-poverty measures (ICN, 2004)
  - National level:
    - Advocacy for public policies that address SDOH, and for 'social justice'; ethical responsibility (CNA, 2002; 2005; 2006)
    - Advocacy a 'standard of practice' for CHNs (CHNAC, 2003)
    - Advocacy a 'core' Public Health competency (PHAC, 2007)

# BARRIERS TO CHN ROLE IN ADVOCACY FOR SC

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- Empirical evidence suggests that most CHNs only minimally involved in advocacy for SC  
(Ballou, 2000; Cohen, 2006; Cohen & Reutter, 2007; Meagher-Stewart, 2001; Williamson & Drummond, 2000)
- Barriers include:
  - CHNs' actual/perceived lack of skills
  - CHNs' hesitance about engaging in an activity that they view as 'political'
  - Lack of time due to mandatory programs

# BARRIERS (cont'd)

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- Lack of support/encouragement from managers
- Organizational philosophy does not promote this type of activity
- Narrow job description
- Workload measures don't capture advocacy activities



# BARRIERS (cont'd)

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- Limited understanding/recognition (from other health professionals/public) about potential role of CHNs in advocacy for SC
- Professional nursing organizations in Canada not as likely to engage in advocacy for *social* policy as they are for health *care* policy

[Cohen, 2006; Cohen & Reutter, 2007; Falk-Rafael 2005a; MacDonald & Schoenfeld, 2003; Meagher- Stewart; 2001; Williamson & Drummond, 2001]

# EXAMPLES OF CHN ADVOCACY FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

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Let's hear your stories....

# STRENGTHENING CHN ROLE IN ADVOCACY FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

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Let's share ideas about strategies...

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