Lessons Learned Developing Indicators for the Built Environment

APHEO Core Indicators for Public Health

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Core Indicators for Public Health in Ontario

The purpose of the Core Indicators Work Group (CIWG) is: to ensure that the Core Indicators for Public Health in Ontario are accurate, up-to-date and reflect the Ontario Public Health Standards; to advocate for health unit access to good quality data in a timely manner; and to promote the use of the Core Indicators

Ontario Public Health Standards

- The Ontario Public Health Standards (OPHS) require Public Health Units in Ontario to work with municipalities to support healthy public policies and to create and enhance supportive environments in recreational settings and the built environment

- The Built Environment has been referenced in the **Chronic Disease and Injury Program Standard**

  The board of health shall work with municipalities to support healthy public policies and the creation or enhancement of supportive environments in recreational settings and the built environment regarding the following topics:
  - Healthy eating;
  - Healthy weights;
  - Comprehensive tobacco control;
  - Physical activity;
  - Alcohol use; and
  - Exposure to ultraviolet radiation
- **Health Hazard Prevention and Management**

The built environment is an important aspect of the physical environment and is comprised of urban and building design, land use, the transportation system and the infrastructure that support them. Several important built environment elements relate to walking rates. These elements include proximity to employment, retail, services, and recreation facilities along with other factors such as perceptions of safety, sense of community connectedness and neighborhood aesthetics

Definition of the Built Environment

OPHS PHAS glossary

- The Built Environment (BE) Subgroup began with the goal of defining indicators that could be used by local public health units to measure and monitor the impact of the built environment on population health outcomes

Preparatory work

- Consultant hired to produce documents that would describe current surveillance and indicator work with in the BE as it related to the Chronic Diseases and Injuries Program Standards of the OPHS
- Three documents were produced:
  1. Environmental Scan of Provincial Policies, Position Statements, Briefing Documents and Legislation Related to the Built Environment and Six Lifestyle Factors
  2. A review of the literature on the effect of the built environment on five chronic disease risk factors for Public Health Professionals interested in surveillance
  3. Investigating Infrastructure Data Sources

(http://www.apheo.ca/index.php?pid=107)

Challenges & Approach

- The built environment influences human behaviour in a complex manner
  - Design, density and diversity are important elements of the built environment
- This needs to be truly understood to ensure that the indicators defined will measure their impact on health outcomes
- We are developing built environment indicators at the
  - street,
  - neighbourhood,
  - city, and
  - inter-city level.
- This is paramount to ensuring we get indicators that truly effect the health in our cities.

Cross-disciplinary partnership

- The development of built environment indicators has benefited from the partnering of municipal planners and public health professionals.
- Each discipline has expertise that is specific to their area of practice, yet has equal value in describing and measuring the health impacts of the Built Environment.
- Epidemiologists are specialists in measurement but we need to know what to measure.
- After adding a planner to our group, we are now engaged in discussions using different language and definitions that are foreign to us as epidemiologists/public health professionals, yet are industry standard for a planner.

Data

- Come from non traditional sources of health data
- May not be consistently collected across all health units

Indicators Currently Under Development

- Split our indicators into three broad groups:
  - Density (eg.job and population)
  - Street connectivity (eg. proximity to X)
  - Land use mix (eg. Housing stock)

Questions/Comments?