

Handbook to Healthier Communities – Influencing Healthy Public Policies

This handbook is for anyone who wants to advance health policy in their community or encourage change at the local level



Credits

The [Ontario Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance](#) (OCDPA) is the provincial collective voice on chronic disease prevention. We are a collaborative of leading health-related organizations working together to focus on chronic disease prevention and healthy living.

Our current membership is comprised of over 30 organizations including representatives from Public Health, health-related research organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), health promotion resource centres, and health-related professional networks. Our membership contributes to the overall vision and mission of the OCDPA through provision of resources, advocacy engagement and knowledge exchange, and the shaping of Alliance events and meetings.

OCDPA would like to thank its Partner organizations for their contribution to this resource:

[Association of Local Public Health Agencies](#)

[Canadian Cancer Society](#)

[Canadian Diabetes Association](#)

[Cancer Care Ontario](#)

[Centre for Addiction and Mental Health](#)

[Health Nexus](#)

[Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario](#)

[Ophea \(Ontario Physical and Health Education Association\)](#)

[OPHA](#)

[Osteoporosis Canada](#)

OCDPA would also like to thank the [Healthy Communities Consortium](#) for its valuable contributions to the development of this resource.

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Introduction

About the Handbook

This handbook is for anyone who wants to advance policy in their community or encourage policy change at the local level. It is a brief version of the *Toolkit to Healthier Communities – Influencing Healthy Public Policies*. The ‘steps’ to policy development are summarized in one-page overview format for your convenience. [Policy ideas](#) are also included in this handbook, which helps support [healthier communities](#). More information on policy, as well as details, examples, tips, resources and worksheets, is provided in the full version of the toolkit to guide you through the steps to policy development. Please refer to the full version of the toolkit at www.ocdpa.on.ca for more information on policy development.

Please note that the handbook is not a comprehensive resource to policy development, a literature review of ‘best practices’, or a thorough analysis of which policies are best for a particular community or setting. It is also important to note that policy development is not a linear (step-by-step) process and you may need to make some adjustments to the policy development process to suit your needs.

“Public policy is the broad framework of ideas and values within which decisions are taken and action, or inaction, is pursued by governments in relation to some issue or problem. Briefly stated, public policy is a choice or decision made by government that guides subsequent actions in similar circumstances.”

- Brooks, 1989

Policies should always be tailored to suit the needs of a community. Partnership and collaboration with a variety of stakeholders will help ensure successful policy development and implementation. Take part in one, if not all, of the steps. Remember, anyone can support and influence policy development!

“Healthy public policy is characterized by an explicit concern for health and equity in all areas of policy and by an accountability for health impact. The main aim of health public policy is to create a supportive environment to enable people to lead healthy lives. Such a policy makes health choices possible or easier for citizens. It makes social and physical environments health-enhancing.”

- WHO, 1988

Here are some examples of how you may use the handbook if you are:

- A manager or a leader at an organization – you could lead the policy development process, help enforce a policy, and support the monitoring and evaluation of a policy;
- A researcher or local authority – you could be engaged in the policy development process to ensure that structures and processes are in place to monitor and evaluate a policy;
- A health professional – you could facilitate the policy change by leading, supporting and advocating for any of the policy development processes described in this handbook;
- A facilitator or a health promotion specialist – you could engage the community, provide workshops and trainings to promote policy change;
- A lay worker, a volunteer or an activist – you could engage people on the issue, and support and influence policy change (see Step 5 of policy development).



To increase impact of your efforts, work with people with common goals and interests.

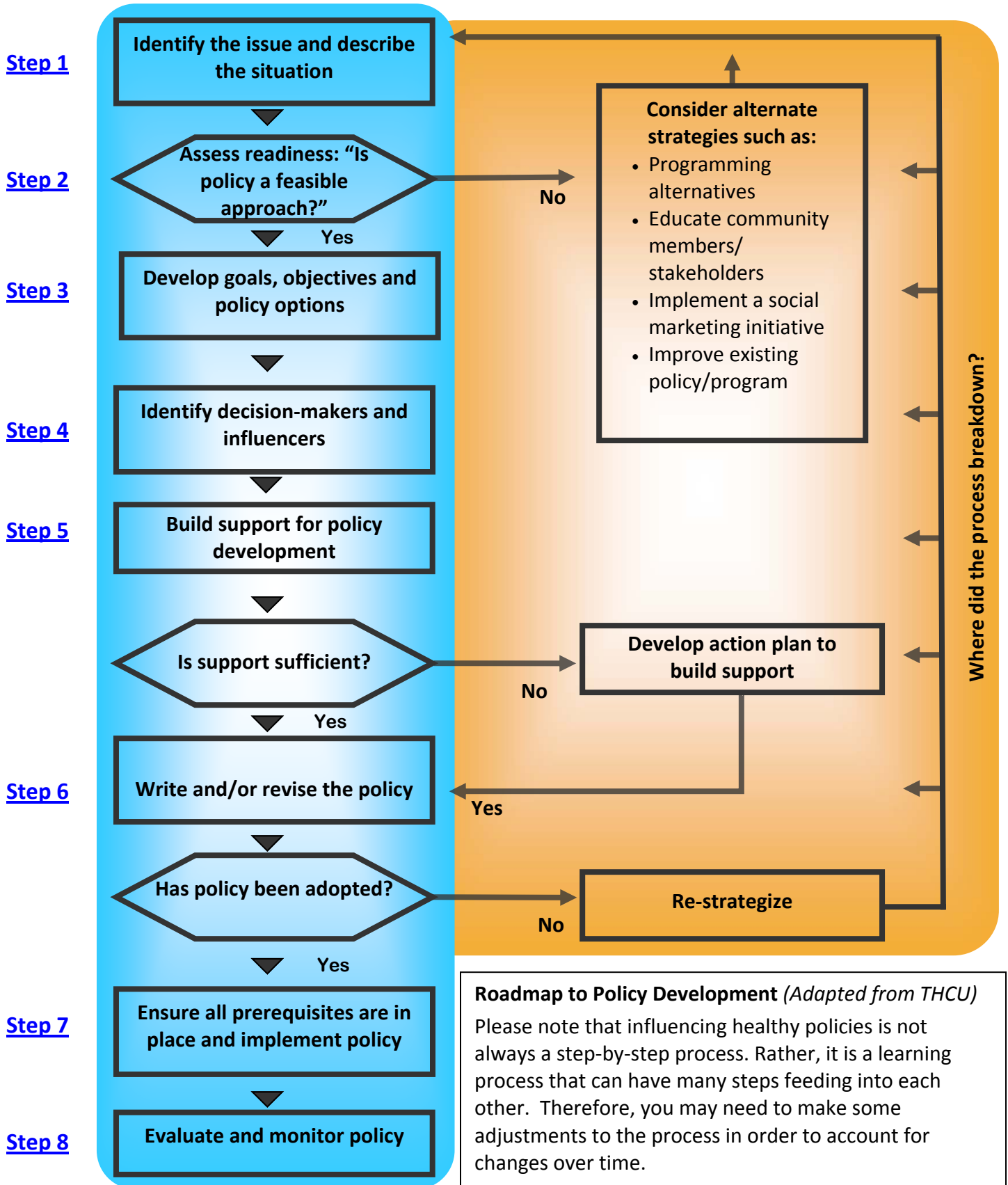
The Toolkit to Healthier Communities – Influencing Healthy Public Policies, Full Version

The full version of the toolkit expands on the work of the [Ontario Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance \(OCDPA\)](#) and its many project partners. It is based on The Health Communication Unit (THCU)'s [8 step process to policy development](#) and builds on the Physical Activity Resource Centre (PARC)'s [Workbook for Influencing Physical Activity Policy](#).

The full version of the toolkit will guide you through the policy development process with:

- A step-by-step outline of the policy-development process;
- Practical worksheets to help you move through the steps;
- Helpful tips for each step;
- Policy ideas to help you identify potential policies to move forward on;
- A Glossary of Terms; and
- Web links for further information/support.

The THCU Roadmap to Policy Development



Roadmap to Policy Development (Adapted from THCU)

Please note that influencing healthy policies is not always a step-by-step process. Rather, it is a learning process that can have many steps feeding into each other. Therefore, you may need to make some adjustments to the process in order to account for changes over time.

Step 1: Identify the Issue and Describe the Situation

Goal of this step:

To gather a detailed understanding of your situation and create a brief communication to summarize.

Why this step is important:

A clear understanding of the situation is necessary in order to develop clear goals, assess potential solutions, and build support for potential solutions.

A one-page document summarizing the situation can serve as a useful communication tool for all stakeholders. Stakeholders include people who are responsible for funding, implementing, and otherwise acting on the potential solutions. The communication brief can also be used as a baseline on which to measure future progress. Later, you will analyze and choose your best possible solution based on the information gathered in this step.

How to do this step:

1) Identify and develop questions to help describe the situation. Your questions should focus on:

- What contributed to the situation?
- What is the impact of the situation?
- What is the stakeholders' perception of the situation?
- What are the possible solutions (including both policy and other options)?

A draft list of questions is provided in the full version of the toolkit for you to use or adapt for your situation.

2) Develop a plan to gather information that will answer your questions. Start by deciding what type of information you need. Note where you can get the information and how to get it.

3) Gather and summarize your information. Gather the information using your plan. In one page, summarize:

- The issue and its impact on your community;
- The origin or cause of the issue;
- Stakeholder perceptions of the issue; and
- Possible solutions.

Are you ready to move to Step 2? Step 1 Checklist:

- Have you used a variety of types of information and methods of data collection and tapped into a variety of resources to answer your questions?
- Are the answers to your questions complete? Are there gaps in the information that you have gathered?
- Do you have information that will support evidence-informed decision-making for your next steps?
- Are you able to explain in one brief sentence, with a few concise supporting paragraphs, what the situation is and what some possible solutions might be?
- Have you asked your primary stakeholders to review your summary of the situation? Do they understand it?

Step 2: Assess Readiness for Policy Development

Goal of this step:

To determine whether to proceed with policy development based on the readiness of your community, organization, and potential partners.

Why this step is important:

Policy development initiatives require appropriate timing and dedicated resources over a long period of time. Failure can result when there are inadequate resources, or when the public is against the development of a new policy. If your community, organization or potential partners are not ready for a new policy, you may need to use another approach to improve the situation.

How to do this step:

1) Use or adapt questions to determine the readiness for policy development. Your questions should focus on determining the readiness of the community and potential partners. A draft list of questions is provided in the full version of the toolkit, accessible at www.ocdpa.on.ca.

2) Develop an information gathering plan to answer your questions about readiness for policy development.

To answer your questions about the readiness for policy development, be sure to collect different types of information such as: community stories/testimonials; history of approach to the issue; key informant interviews; and organizational mandates. You could use a variety of information gathering methods (e.g., consultation, survey, past documents) and resources (e.g., community members, government departments, non-governmental groups, your local health unit) to collect the information.

3) Organize and analyze your findings. Once you have collected all your information, you can now focus on the implications of your findings, such as by weighing the pros and cons of moving forward on your policy options. One way to do this is to conduct a Force Field Analysis to decide whether or not to proceed with policy development.

A **Force Field Analysis** allows you to visualize various ‘driving’ and ‘restraining’ forces for possible approaches to your situation (i.e., policy options, as well as other options like education, programs, projects, etc.). Force Fields may help or impede the policy development process and are present at various levels such as individual, networks, organizations, communities, or entire countries.

4) Decide how to proceed. Review the answers to your questions on readiness for policy development and your findings from the Force Field Analysis. Consider whether you are ready to proceed with policy development. If your organization or community is not ready for policy development, consider alternate possible solutions.

Are you ready to move to Step 3? Step 2 Checklist:

- Have you reviewed the results from your information gathering process and your proposed course of action with relevant stakeholders?
- Have your original proposed policy options from Step 1 changed or evolved to an extent that you need to gather more data on community and organizational readiness?

Step 3: Develop Goals, Objectives and Policy Options

Goal of this step:

To define clear goals and objectives for the policy change and to generate a list of policy options for decision-makers to consider.

Why this step is important:

Setting goals is critical to designing your policy. The goal setting process is also a time for stakeholders to become invested and inspired.

Concise, well-written objectives are critical for focusing your planning efforts and clarifying next steps to stakeholders, particularly those interested in evaluation or research. Also, objectives are the basis for selecting indicators for success (Step 5), which is a crucial part of the evaluation process.

Putting forward more than one policy option shows stakeholders that you are flexible and willing to negotiate. Assessing many options prepares you to explain why there are certain ones that you will not support.

How to do this step:

1) Develop one or two policy goals.

Goals are broad statements summarizing the *ultimate direction or desired achievement* of your policy.

2) Develop your policy objectives. An **objective** is a brief statement specifying the *desired impact or effect* of a policy, how much of what should happen to whom, and by when. Objectives should be **SMART** (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and timely). Note that most policies have one to two goals, with multiple objectives.

3) Generate a list of policy options. **Policy options** are choices regarding the types of policies that can be put in place to address an issue and improve the situation. When generating policy options, consider: the status quo (i.e. the way things currently are); alternatives favoured by key decision-makers; what other communities are doing to address this issue; and new options.

[Policy ideas](#) are included near the end of this handbook for your consideration.

4) Assess all policy options to determine how they fit with your goals and objectives. Practical policy options are those that directly contribute to one or more of your policy objectives. Remove policy options that do not contribute to your objectives. Create new policy options to address objectives that are not matched with an option.

Are you ready to move to Step 4? Step 3 Checklist:

- Have you identified one or two goals and a reasonable number of policy objectives?
- Are your objectives SMART?
- Do you have at least two, maximum four, policy options to present to decision-makers?
- Do you have an understanding of the expected level of community support for each of your policy options?

Step 4: Identify and Understand Key Decision-Makers and Influencers

Goal of this step:

To decide which decision-makers and influencers will be the focus of your support-building efforts.

Why this step is important:

Developing connections and [partnerships](#) with decision-makers and influencers can increase the chances of your policy being adopted and properly implemented. Choosing the wrong people can result in wasted resources and may also jeopardize future policy development efforts or partnership opportunities.

Understanding your decision-makers and influencers will fuel your efforts to build support in Step 5.

How to do this step:

1) Develop a list of key decision-makers and influencers. *Decision-makers* are individuals who decide on a course of action. Who the final decision-maker is depends on the policy being put forward, who is officially responsible, and, in some cases, who has been chosen by participants to make the decision. *Influencers* are individuals who exert or produce effects on the actions, behaviour, opinions, etc., of others. These influencers (including constituents of the decision-makers, staff, community leaders, and other decision-makers) are extremely important in determining whether or not your policy gets adopted and is properly implemented.

Brainstorm a generic list of positions or types of people that may be decision-makers (e.g., government officials, executives/leaders/board or committee members of an organization) or key influencers (e.g., school principals, parent councils, city council members). Talk to your partners (e.g., local organizations, public health units) and conduct other research as necessary (e.g., phone calls, consultations) to make the list more specific, naming individuals wherever possible.

2) Find out as much as you can about how these individuals or groups make decisions. Familiarizing yourself with the people who you wish to persuade to take a particular action is called *“Audience Analysis”*. Gather information about your decision-makers and influencers by answering a few key questions (see full toolkit version). You may think of other types of audience analysis information that will help direct your efforts to build support for your policy, such as an individual’s personal interests (e.g. family, hobbies). Avoid making assumptions about decision-makers and influencers. Do your research by talking to your partners and those in their organizations and offices, by reviewing community media coverage, etc.

3) Prioritize and determine the order in which you will engage these decision-makers and influencers. Make a list of the top five, most powerful decision-makers and influencers on your list. Make another list of the top five most accessible decision-makers and influencers on your list (i.e., those who are most interested in your cause, are willing to discuss with you, etc.) Where do they overlap? This may help you to prioritize and choose the decision-makers and influencers that will assist your support-building efforts in the next step.

Are you ready to move to Step 5? Step 4 Checklist:

- Do you have a short-list of decision-makers and influencers?
- Have you familiarized yourself with the decision-makers and influencers on your short-list?
- Do you have the resources to engage decision-makers and influencers as you build support for your policy in Step 5?

Step 5: Build Support for Healthy Public Policies

Goal of this step:

To reach key decision-makers and influencers through effective communication channels and vehicles and to effectively promote the messages that will help to build support for your chosen policy options (see Step 6).

Why this step is important:

Getting support for your policy will help you get your policy approved. Being strategic as to to whom, when and how you relay your messages will allow you to make optimal use of available resources. An effective communication plan will help persuade people and will gather additional information that will support you in continually improving your persuasion strategy. You can also work with groups with common goals and interests to increase the impact of your efforts!

How to do this step:

1) Choose channels and vehicles to reach decision-makers and influencers. *Channels* are broad ways in which a message is sent (via TV, radio, Internet, interpersonal communication, etc.), whereas *vehicles* are specific ways of delivering messages through those channels (e.g., ads and Public Service Announcements on TV, blogs on the Internet, presentations or letters as interpersonal vehicles, etc.)

When trying to reach different people and organizations, use specific channels and vehicles that you know they pay attention to, rather than trying to reach everyone through the same methods.

2) Develop messages to send through those channels and vehicles. Messages need to be tailored to different individuals and organizations (i.e. your audiences) and refined over time as community environment and readiness changes. Every message should include information on: what you want the audience to do; why you think they should care; what else do they need to know to make their decision. Message content should address: the links between the policy and a compelling issue or problem; simple descriptions of the proposed solutions; and signs within the community that change is warranted and desired. Messages should also either directly or indirectly address arguments from your opposition.

3) Implement and assess communication activities over an extended period of time so that decision-makers and influencers are prepared to accept the policy that you will develop in Step 6. In policy development, you must use and adapt different methods over time, as public opinion, media, and decision-maker environment also change over time. It is important to constantly scan the community for opportunities to get your messages out. Because of the constantly changing nature of the policy development process, your communication strategy may need to be revised several times before you are ready to present a complete policy to decision-makers.

Are you ready to move to Step 6? Step 5 Checklist:

- Have you chosen a reasonable number of vehicles for each priority audience? Can they be used with the resources that you have available?
- Have you chosen a variety of communication vehicles (i.e. both one-way and two-way communication)?
- Are your vehicle choices appropriate for the information gained about your decision-makers and influencers (Step 4) and for the information about community readiness gathered in Step 2?
- Do your messages clearly answer Now What? So What? and What Else? for the intended audiences?

Step 6: Write and/or Revise the Policy

Goal of this step:

To define the specific logistical and legal aspects of a policy.

Why this step is important:

The precise wording of the policy often dictates whether or not it will be adopted. Clear and concise wording of a policy will help ensure alignment with policy goals and objectives, will gain support from stakeholders, and will facilitate proper implementation of the policy.

How to do this step:

1) Write the policy. Gather policy examples to help you with the writing process.

A good policy includes:

- A preface or preamble describing the purpose of the policy;
- A description of the policy goals, objectives, and how the policy meets those objectives;
- A description of the activities, regulations and sanctions, including who is responsible for what; and
- Procedures for failure to comply with the policy.

2) Consult with stakeholders. Consulting with stakeholders throughout the writing and revision process is highly recommended. Community consultations are often a part of this process. It is also wise to consult with a legal professional (e.g. lawyer) or an individual who has prior experience related to the policy, so as to ensure that the policy can be enforced. It is important that stakeholders not only support the policy in principle, but also understand all of its details.

3) Revise the policy until approval is gained from decision-makers. Be prepared to revise the policy as many times as needed to gain approval from decision-makers. Remember that writing is a skill. Consider hiring a professional to edit or write portions of the policy to ensure that it is written in the clearest language possible.

Please note that it may be necessary to repeat Step 6 several times in order to arrive at a policy that satisfies all stakeholders.

Are you ready to move to Step 7? Step 6 Checklist:

- Are all stakeholders satisfied with the policy?
- Do all stakeholders understand the logistical and legal aspects of the policy?
- Do you have the resources to implement and enforce compliance with the policy?
- Has your policy been approved by the appropriate decision-makers?

Step 7: Ensure all Prerequisites are in Place and Implement the Policy

Goal of this step:

To ensure that all prerequisites are in place for policy implementation, and then implement the policy.

Why this step is important:

This step will help you avoid some of the possible setbacks to policy implementation. Many policies are withdrawn when implementation is not practical, too costly, controversial, or when there is a lack of measurable progress toward the goal.

How to do this step:

1) Ensure that all prerequisites are in place for policy implementation. Before implementing a policy, ensure that:

- You have a plan to promote, disseminate, implement, enforce, monitor and evaluate the policy. Your plan should include information on who is responsible for various aspects of the plan;
- You have an estimate of the resources needed for implementation;
- The timeline for all aspects of implementation is realistic and logically sequenced;
- You have consulted with people responsible for funding, enforcing, and otherwise acting upon the policy; and
- The approval of key decision-makers and stakeholders has been obtained for both the policy and all aspects of the implementation plan.

2) Implement the policy. Throughout the implementation process, continue to consult with all stakeholders responsible for promoting, disseminating, implementing, enforcing, monitoring and evaluating the policy. Even when implementation is in progress, you may need to revisit the first six steps of the policy development process, especially understanding the decision-makers and influencers and building or maintaining support for the policy.

Are you ready to move to Step 8? Step 7 Checklist:

- Have you identified the timeline, resources required, and people responsible for:
 - Promotion,
 - Dissemination,
 - Other communication,
 - Enforcement,
 - Monitoring,
 - Evaluation, and
 - Other aspects of implementation?
- Do you have a plan that includes consultation with stakeholders as the implementation proceeds?

Step 8: Monitor and Evaluate the Policy

Goal of this step:

To develop and manage an ongoing system that will assist in evaluating the effectiveness of your policy.

Why this step is important:

For a policy to be effective, it must be flexible to changing circumstances and unintended consequences. Identifying problems early on and making timely changes to your policy can help prevent the policy from being abandoned or fully withdrawn when challenges arise. Timely monitoring and thorough evaluation will also help to demonstrate accountability to stakeholders and reduce implementation costs.

How to do this step:

There are five parts to this step: 1) Identify monitoring and evaluation questions, 2) Identify indicators, 3) Develop methods of measurement and procedures to monitor and evaluate your policy, 4) Collect and synthesize your data, and 5) Communicate and act on your results.

A policy evaluation should:

- Link your evaluation measures to the goals and objectives of the policy.
- Select realistic methods to collect data (e.g., questionnaires, surveys, focus groups).
- Try to include a mix of both quantitative (numerical) and qualitative (descriptive) data to understand the impact of the policy.
- Collect data throughout implementation of the policy.

There are many comprehensive resources on how to plan for and carry out an effective evaluation. Consult with relevant experts to help you plan and implement the monitoring and evaluation processes. A brief overview of the processes is provided in the full version of the toolkit, accessible at www.ocdpa.on.ca.

Policy Ideas for Healthier Communities

This section offers [evidence-informed policy](#) ideas that support healthier communities. These policy ideas have been identified by experts in the respective priority area.

Taking action on these policy ideas supports the goals of Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport's [Healthy Communities Framework](#):

- 1) To create a culture of health and wellbeing.
- 2) To increase coordinated action to build healthier communities.
- 3) To increase policies and programs that make it easier for Ontarians to be healthy.
- 4) To increase the capacity of leaders to work together to strengthen healthy living.

Healthy public policies should be part of a comprehensive approach to [healthier communities](#). To help you browse through the policy ideas, they are categorized by communities, schools, and workplaces, and then sub-categorized by priority area: alcohol misuse, healthy eating, injury prevention, mental health, physical activity, sports and recreation, and tobacco use/exposure.

In addition to advancing local policies, community members should also support provincial initiatives and advocate for government level policies that help Ontarians to lead healthier and more active lives. Community partnership is necessary to advance healthier communities. For more information or support on policy issues, please contact the appropriate organizations found in the Supporting Healthy Public Policies and Building Community Partnerships section of the toolkit.

Communities

Guiding Principle: Establish healthy community policies to create [supportive, inclusive environments](#) in public facilities (e.g., schools, recreation centres, municipal buildings, libraries, hospitals) to improve community services and the [built environment](#), with a focus in the following priority areas:

- increasing physical activity
- preventing injury
- making healthy foods accessible
- reducing tobacco exposure
- preventing alcohol and substance misuse
- fostering positive mental health

Priority Area: Physical Activity, Sports and Recreation

To ensure that all children and their families have access and opportunity to participate in a [wide range of physical activity programs throughout the year](#), create a coordinated community physical activity policy with recreation/sport providers, community groups and [school boards](#) aligned with [Canada’s Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living](#).

Establish policies that [reduce barriers to participation](#) in physical activity and sport and recreation programs, such as program fees, equipment cost, transportation, etc. Policies can include:

- Fee assistance or subsidy programs for low-income participants;
- Free universal programs (i.e. drop-in swim, supervised playground program) for all residents;
- Equipment trade-in programs;
- Free transportation for youth traveling to programs.

For more policy ideas, see the [Affordable Access Promising Practices Guide](#) and the [Framework for Affordable Access to Recreation in Ontario](#).

Establish policies that encourage walking in your community:

- Promote safe and active transportation;
- Improve land use planning to make appealing, accessible walk routes to reduce dependence on cars;
- Develop connected walking routes in communities;
- Reduce road danger.

See the [International Charter for Walking](#) for more policy ideas to provide a framework for creating healthy, efficient, and sustainable communities where people choose to walk.

While each community will base its policy on local needs and resources, examples can include:

- Joint use agreements between school boards and municipalities that streamline facility rental for community groups;
- Establish an active school travel policy that promotes safe, active travel to and from school;



Communities

- Establish policy that supports the integration of the Canada Sport for Life model into the education, recreation, active living, and sport development systems;
- Ensure the development of programs facilitating participation in physical activity in less active populations;
- Develop innovative and accessible after school programs linking community recreation programs and services to schools;
- Use effective communication, including social marketing, to increase awareness among all community members about how and where to be physically active.

For more policy ideas, see [The Toronto Charter for Physical Activity: A Global Call to Action](#), which provides a framework to build healthier, active, environmentally sustainable communities.

Priority Area: Injury Prevention

Modify the human-made surroundings that provide the setting for older adults' activities. Example:

- Increase the traffic signal time to cross the street;
- Work with public building managers to design uniform stairway rise/depth (7 inches deep/11 inches high);
- Install handrails on both sides of the stairs and provide lighting at the top and bottom of the stairs;
- Align crosswalks with curb cuts;
- Ask municipalities to develop a public hazard hotline;
- Conduct home inspections using a home safety checklist and follow up with modification changes.

Support personal programs for older adults that focus on physical activity, medication review and modification, and health management. For example:

- Offer exercise programs with balance training, e.g., Tai Chi, weight and resistance training, walking, and dancing;
- Increase awareness about annual reviews for drug doses and medication interactions;
- Provide social activities to create wider social networks, information sharing, and just for fun.

Modify road designs and plans to suit the safe road function for all road users:

- Speed limits no greater than 30 km/h in residential areas;
- Traffic calming measures on residential roads and an increase in median barriers;
- Increase local enforcement to reduce speeding, aggressive driving and distracted driving;
- Conduct local awareness campaigns on driver fatigue and its consequences;
- Increase the number of random breath testing checks to reduce impaired driving ;
- Increase the availability of services that offer brief clinical interventions and alcohol problem assessments and treatment.

Communities

Modify the external surroundings and conditions in which sports and recreational activities take place:

- Maintain the good condition of community parks and fields by removing uneven surfaces, large holes in the ground, poor lighting, and sharp surfaces or glass;
- Create and/or enforce sport and recreational policies regarding standards or regulations for sports equipment and appropriate protective gear;
- When building new arenas, design larger ice surfaces to reduce the risk of injury to hockey players;
- Enforce the rule prohibiting checking from behind in minor hockey;
- Keep community centres open for extended hours to ensure that youth and children in low-income areas have a safe place to participate in sports and recreation activities;
- Increase awareness about sport specific risks and provide safe practice alternatives.

Priority Area: Healthy Eating

Establish and promote healthy food policies for workplace, public buildings, and facilities, including:

- [Guidelines for food and beverages sold](#) in snack bars and cafeterias and served at meetings, special functions, and community events;
- Pricing strategies that put the cost of healthier food and beverage choices (e.g. vegetables, fruit, and milk) lower than the cost of food and beverages low in nutritional value/ nutrient density;
- Promotional strategies that feature healthier food and beverage choices prominently on menu boards to encourage purchase of these items;
- Elimination of advertising and marketing of food and beverages of low nutritional value/low nutrient density on menus, menu boards, vending machines, scoreboards pool floors, gyms, etc.;
- Provision of nutrition education for all food service staff.

Establish policies to [support the use of local foods](#) in the community and for municipal or regional food venues, community programs and events, including:

- Local sustainable food procurement practices for municipal food services and [recreation facilities](#), grocery stores, food markets, and convenience stores;
- Use of locally produced food for community events and community food box and meal programs;
- Support of farmers' markets/roadside stalls to provide greater access to locally produced foods.

Establish municipal planning and transportation policies that increase access to healthy food, including:

- Municipal and regional plans that include sites for grocery stores, food markets, farmers' markets and community gardens;
- Transportation routes/bus stops within walking distance of grocery stores and food markets.

Communities

Priority Area: Tobacco Use/Exposure

Ban smoking/tobacco use:

- Nine metres around exits/entrances;
- Nine metres from buildings used for medical diagnostic testing;
- In all restaurants, bars, and patios;
- In all condominiums, apartment buildings, and public housing;
- Outdoor workplaces (e.g. construction sites) and non-workplace environments (e.g. beaches, parks, playgrounds, sports fields).

Increase authority for inspectors to

- Immediately issue fines;
- Close stores;
- Take other actions similar to food inspections.

Implement (or increase existing) licensing fees for:

- Existing tobacco vendors;
- Prospective tobacco vendors.

Establish municipal limits on the number of tobacco retail licenses available.

Priority Area: Alcohol Misuse

Restrict or ban [alcohol advertisements/signage](#). This could include:

- [Ban sponsorship](#) from organizations associated with the production and/or sale of alcohol;
- Ban alcohol advertisements/signage at patios, university and college grounds, beaches, parks, playgrounds, parade grounds;
- Limit the number of alcohol advertisements/signage allowed on the property;
- Limit the size of alcohol advertisements/signage allowed on the property;
- Restrict where alcohol advertisements/signage could be placed;
- Restrict the visibility of the advertisements/signage within the property.

Establish [comprehensive alcohol policies](#) for health-services providers, including:

- Screening, brief interventions and referral with at-risk drinkers;
- Mutual help/self help attendance;
- Medical and social detoxification;
- Talk therapies that have shown to have a positive impact.



Communities

Support [comprehensive alcohol policies](#) at the government level, including¹:

- Alcohol taxes indexed with Consumer Price Index (CPI);
- Set indexed minimum alcohol prices;
- Government control of alcohol retailing;
- Restrict the number of outlets within a given area;
- Limitations on hours and days of sale;
- Insure that pricing is based on ethanol content per standard drink, e.g. a bottle of higher strength beer is not cheaper than lower strength bottle;
- Enhanced enforcement of on-premise laws and legal requirements;
- Legal liability of alcoholic beverage servers;
- Legal restrictions on exposure to alcohol advertising;
- Enhanced Liquor License Act enforcement of on-premise laws and legal requirements (such as AGCO inspectors or advocate for more AGCO inspectors).

Priority Area: Mental Health

Establish policies that provide a wide range of educational opportunities and make available literacy programs, job training, and job readiness programs.

Ensure affordable and accessible [recreational activities](#), and establish policies that provide

- Fee assistance or subsidy programs for low-income participants;
- Free, universal programs (e.g. drop-in swim, supervised playground program) for all residents;
- Increased availability of activities across neighbourhoods;
- Opening “community hubs” where multiple organizations provide health and social services and recreational programs, and where there is [community space](#).

Establish policies that increase structured opportunities for volunteerism and civic participation. Policies can include:

- Develop a municipal/regional online clearinghouse of volunteering/civic participation opportunities;
- Implement programs that increase the participation of equity-seeking groups on Boards and Commissions.

Increase access to [affordable and safe housing](#). Policies can include:

- As part of Human Resource policies and procedures, all new staff of an organization must receive orientation and training on mental health;
- Provide training to shelter staff and other housing providers on mental health and mental illness;
- Combat “not in my backyard” attitudes to provide more affordable housing options in safe neighbourhoods.

¹ Drinking and driving controls are part of a comprehensive alcohol policy. However, they are not included since the focus is on alcohol and chronic disease. In some cases, communities can advocate for changes at the provincial level, and in others, can enact changes in their jurisdiction. The list is taken from T. Babor et al. (2010) *Alcohol No Ordinary Commodity- research and public policy*. Oxford: Oxford U. Press, pp. 243-248.

Schools

Guiding Principle: To establish healthy school policies at the board and school level based on [Ontario's Foundations for a Healthy School framework](#) and philosophy. The policies should recognize that all students and staff are entitled to work and learn in a healthy environment. The policy intent is to improve student achievement and student and staff well-being through high quality instruction and programs, supportive social environments, healthy physical environments, and community partnerships.

Priority Area: Physical Activity; Sports and Recreation

Create a coordinated community physical activity policy with recreation/sport providers, community groups and [school boards](#) aligned with [Canada's Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living](#) so that all children and their families have access and opportunity to participate in a wide range of physical activities throughout the year. Healthy school physical activity policies will improve student and staff health through:

- Quality instruction and programs;
- Supportive social environments;
- Healthy physical environments; and
- Community partnerships.

For more school physical activity policy ideas, see the [Joint Consortium for School Health's Physical Activity Toolkit for School Policy Makers](#).

While each community will base its policy on local needs and resources, including:

- Establishing joint use between school boards and municipalities that streamline facility rental for community groups;
- Establish an active school travel policy that promotes safe, active travel to and from school;
- Establish policy that supports the integration of the Canada Sport for Life model into the education, recreation, active living and sport development systems;
- Ensure the development of programs that facilitate participation in physical activity in less active populations;
- Develop innovative, accessible after-school programs that link community recreation programs and services to schools;
- Through effective communication, including social marketing, increase awareness among all community members about how and where to be physically active.

Establish local policies that [reduce barriers to participation](#) in sport and recreation programs, such as program fees, equipment cost, transportation, etc. Policies can include:

- Establish joint use agreements between school boards and municipalities to improve access to facilities for sport and recreation community groups;
- Establish inclusive physical activity policies for sport programs in schools that ensure that all students can participate in a supportive and non-competitive environment.

For more policy ideas, see the [Affordable Access Promising Practices Guide](#) and the [Framework for Affordable Access to Recreation in Ontario](#).



Schools

Priority Area: Healthy Eating

To promote and support healthy eating through supportive nutritional environment and increased access to healthy foods compliant with [Ontario's PPM 150 School Food and Beverage Policy](#), establish school nutrition policies at the board and school level that may include:

- Pricing strategies that put the cost of healthier food and beverage choices (e.g. vegetables, fruit, and milk) lower than the cost of food and beverages low in nutritional value/low nutrient density;
- Culturally appropriate food choices;
- Use of healthy foods or non-food items for fundraising;
- Use of locally produced foods in school food programs;
- Elimination of advertising and marketing of food and beverages of low nutritional value/low nutrient density within the school (e.g. on menu boards, vending machines, scoreboards, pool floors, gyms);
- Guidelines for food and beverages served at meetings and special functions and school events;
- Nutrition education for all teachers;
- Nutrition education for all foodservice staff;
- Nutrition education for parents;
- Safe food handling practices and an allergy-safe environment;
- Nutrition breaks scheduled at appropriate times with sufficient time allocated to eat.

Priority Area: Tobacco Use/Exposure

Establish tobacco-free sales zones around schools and school policy aimed at bringing children, youth, young adults, parents and other relatives, teachers, guidance counsellors, and/or public health nurses and promoters to discuss tobacco use and provide smoking cessation assistance.

For more comprehensive school health policy ideas, see the [Joint Consortium for School Health](#), which has numerous fact sheets, reviews and resources, including [Toolkits for School Policy Makers and Decision Makers](#).

Priority Area: Alcohol Misuse

Promote [comprehensive school alcohol policies](#) that include:

- Raising awareness of risks of drinking, including alcoholic poisoning, impact on learning ability, increasing victims of violence, and others;
- Drawing attention to links between easy access to alcohol and the damaging effects of alcohol in the student's community;
- Demonstrating how proven community-based programs and policies can benefit all community members;
- Outlining what the student and his/her peers and families can do to advocate for and support effective alcohol policies in his/her community.

Restrict or ban [alcohol advertisements/signage](#) and [ban sponsorship](#) from organizations that produce and/or sell alcohol, including sponsorship for

- Events (e.g. sports, music, school, fundraising);
- Production of products; and
- Delivery of services.



Schools

Priority Area: Mental Health

At the school board level, establish, implement, and monitor policies that support a [‘whole school’ approach](#) to “promote health and well-being, and shape a respectful, welcoming and caring school environment” (PHAC 2004). Examples:

- Schools should provide students with programs to prevent bullying, to [increase awareness](#) about mental illness and the stigma that surrounds it, and to build [resilience](#);
- Board policies should include comprehensive [mental health literacy](#) strategies that address [equity, stigma, and discrimination](#) strategies;
- Board policies should include building partnerships with parents and the [community](#) to create [supportive environments](#) (e.g. providing information from community partners for parents, friends and neighbours, such as in the school newsletter and school-based events).



Workplaces

Guiding Principle: Establish healthy workplace policies that provide education, support, and opportunities for employees to lead healthier lives. The aim of this policy is to improve employee wellness by providing supportive environments, with access to healthy food choices and facilities to support physical activity (e.g. showers, fitness facilities, outdoor walking areas).

Priority Area: Physical Activity, Sport and Recreation

To promote active transportation in the workplace, establish policies such as:

- Provide secure indoor or outdoor spaces for bicycle parking;
- Provide showers or larger changing rooms for employees.

Establish policies that promote [physical activity in the workplace](#), such as:

- Provide taxable transit or active transportation benefits to employees in lieu of free parking;
- Encourage participation in on-site physical activity programs by providing incentives;
- Offer subsidies for physical activity sessions/training as part of Wellness program reimbursement (e.g. yoga, dance, self-defence, martial arts), fitness facility memberships, employees fitness assessments, and physical activity equipment.

Set up policies that support employees' efforts to be physically active by addressing work-life balance, such as:

- Flexible work arrangements;
- Flex hours;
- Dress down days;
- Stretch break every 1.5 to 2 hours during longer meetings;
- Work-time allowance for physical activity.

Priority Area: Healthy Eating

Establish healthy food policies for workplace and facilities, including:

- [Guidelines for food and beverages sold](#) in snack bars and cafeterias and served at meetings, special functions, and community events;
- Pricing strategies that put the cost of healthier food and beverage choices (e.g. vegetables, fruit, and milk) lower than the cost of food and beverages low in nutritional value or with low nutrient density;
- Promotional strategies that feature healthier food and beverage choices prominently on menu boards to encourage purchase of these items;
- Elimination of advertising and marketing of food and beverages of low nutritional value/low nutrient density in cafeterias, menus, menu boards, vending machines, lunch rooms, tuck shops, and fitness or other facilities;
- Local sustainable food procurement practices for worksite food services;
- Provision of nutrition education for all food service staff;
- Provision of nutrition education as part of employee wellness programs.

Workplaces

Priority Area: Tobacco Use/Exposure

Ban smoking/tobacco use

- Nine metres around exits/entrances;
- Nine metres from buildings used for medical diagnostic testing;
- On all restaurant and bar patios;
- In all condominium and apartment buildings (voluntary policy);
- In all public housing;
- In outdoor workplaces (e.g. construction sites) and non-workplace environments (e.g. university and college grounds, expos, parade grounds).

Establish employee health care benefits and/or Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) which include:

- Smoking cessation counselling;
- Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT);
- Pharmacotherapy.

Priority Area: Alcohol Misuse

Introduce [comprehensive workplace alcohol policies](#) such as:

- Employees, volunteers, and contractors are expected to be 'fit for work' ;
- No employee should report being unfit for work due to the consequences of alcohol consumption;
- No employee can consume alcoholic beverages during working hours.

Place restrictions or bans on [alcohol advertisements/signage](#) in the workplace, including:

- Limiting the number of alcohol advertisements/signage allowed on the property;
- Limiting the size of alcohol advertisements/signage allowed on the property;
- Restricting where alcohol advertisements/signage can be placed;
- Restricting the visibility of the advertisements/signage within the property.

[Ban sponsorship](#) from organizations that produce and/or sell alcohol, including sponsorship for

- Events (e.g. sports, music, school, fundraising, government, corporate);
- Production of products;
- Delivery of services.



Workplaces

Priority Area: Mental Health

Establish policies that promote, address issues of [workplace bullying, harassment and discrimination](#), and promote [equity](#) and a [work/life balance](#), including:

- Flexible work hours;
- Worksite child care;
- Telecommuting (e.g. working from home).

Develop policies that require staff and volunteer orientation sessions to include mental health training for people in positions of actual or perceived power. For example, managers and staff with programmatic responsibilities related to the public such as social housing staff including maintenance, security, rental collection, rent setting and related positions could benefit from this training.

Establish policies and procedures to manage a workplace's duty to accommodate employees experiencing [mental disabilities in the workplace](#).

Create a Workplace Wellness Committee that develops and implements strategies that promote positive mental health for employees.

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