# Event Brief

## Webinar: Exploring health equity from a program perspective

June 30, 2021

A [recording](#) of this webinar is available

## Purpose

Health equity is a term widely used in population mental health promotion; however, its application remains somewhat unclear.  This webinar aimed to explore core concepts, principles, and approaches to advance health equity that underpin the Mental Health Promotion Innovation Fund (MHP-IF).  It introduced MHP-IF projects to several tools to make health equity more explicit at the design, implementation and measurement stages of project interventions.

## Participants

The webinar was hosted by the Hub Secretariat and led by two members of the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) MHP-IF team. It was attended by 20 MHP-IF project team members, 6 PHAC MHP-IF team members, and 7 Hub team members (Secretariat and Hub Resource Collaborative).

## Meeting structure

- Barb Riley, Hub Scientific Director, gave opening remarks and introduced the two speakers for the webinar, Kelly Salmond and Andrea Simpson, Policy Analysts from the PHAC MHP-IF team, who are engaged in building health equity concepts and practice into the MHP-IF.
- Kelly Salmond introduced health equity including key terms, definitions, and core concepts to build a common understanding.
- Andrea Simpson then introduced a series of new tools.
- Participants took part in polls regarding the perceived usefulness and level of interest in future workshops exploring these resources.
- The webinar concluded with a discussion and opportunity for questions.

## What did we learn?

**Creating a common understanding**

- To warm up to the topic, webinar participants shared words or phrases that came to mind when thinking about health equity. Some of these included: health for all, intersectionality, determinants of health, health in all policies, empowering, setting priorities, and no one left behind.

- Health equity is defined as "a policy objective that is evidence-informed and values-based" and refers to avoidable, measurable differences in health amongst populations and groups that are based on underlying levels of disadvantage, whether social, economic or geographic.
- Three concepts help to position equity work: **equality** (opportunity for all); **equity** (based on context and identifying differing needs for more equal outcomes); and **removing barriers** (systems change).
- The goal of the MHP-IF is to support promising and innovative population health interventions that seek to remove barriers to health equity through strong partnerships, reflexive practice, new learning, knowledge exchange, and systems change.
- Core concepts that underpin the MHP-IF approach to health equity include: social innovation, structural barriers, intersectionality and cultural safety.

**MHP-IF Guidance and Tools**

- New tools and resources were presented that aim to make health equity more explicit within the design, implementation, and measurement stages of project interventions.
- The first resource, *Toward Health Equity: A tool for developing equity-sensitive public health interventions*, integrates concepts related to health equity and population health promotion that help guide projects through a series of five overlapping and iterative steps: 1) Equity objectives, 2) Social determinants, 3) Mediating factors, 4) Engagement strategies, and 5) Equity targeting.
- A 'placemat' (visual overview and diagram of the steps) illustrates how the first 3 steps align with downstream, midstream and upstream components, depicting various influencing factors at which an intervention hopes to bring about change in health equity.
- The placemat also depicts how the final two steps target project implementation including concepts related to increasing engagement, empowerment and reach.
- The updated *Health Equity Indicators Tool (HEIT)* is a program level tool to assist projects with program measurement and reporting functions (including the PART).
- This tool (HEIT) can be used in two ways: 1) to identify project components that address health equity or potential gaps, and 2) to strengthen capacity to integrate, monitor and assess impacts related to health equity.

**How will learnings from this event be used?**

➢ The health equity terms, concepts, resources and tools presented may assist project teams in sharing a common understanding of health equity.
➢ The tools and resources shared in this webinar may be useful to MHP-IF projects as they incorporate health equity concepts into their current and future project designs, implementation and evaluation plans.
➢ The interest expressed by webinar participants will inform the timing and substance of future workshops to delve deeper into the new project-level tools.
➢ Resources related to health equity will be made available on the Hub website