

THE EDMONTON CHARTER FOR HEALTH PROMOTING UNIVERSITIES AND INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

BACKGROUND

The concept of health promoting universities and institutions of higher education is based on the work, experience and learnings of the Healthy Cities, Workplaces and Schools movements and the European Network of Health Promoting Universities.

The Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion (1986) and the Bangkok Charter for Health Promotion in a Globalized World (2005) are important foundational documents for understanding the evolution and importance of health promotion.

The Millennium Goals (WHO 2000) and the Civil Society Initiative (WHO2001) are important documents for determining the role and responsibilities institutions of higher education may potentially fulfill.

The first International Conference on Health Promoting Universities was held in Lancaster, United Kingdom in 1996. In the Pan American Region, the first International Conference for Health Promoting Universities was held in Santiago, Chile in November 2003. Discussion has continued on establishing a Pan American or Regional Network for health promoting universities/institutions of higher education.

In October 2005, the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada hosted the second international conference in the Pan American Region, where delegates were asked to participate in development of this Charter. This Charter is intended to be a “living” document that will continue to evolve through continued networking and ongoing dialogue between partner institutions.

THE ROLE OF UNIVERSITIES AND INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Universities and institutions of higher education exist to: educate students, create knowledge through research and contribute to the community and a civil society. As corporations and communities, they impact the health and wellbeing of individuals. They have the ability to influence decision makers, act as catalysts for change and to encourage dialogue locally, regionally and globally on health promotion. As research institutions they contribute to creation of knowledge on public health and health promotion in a globalized world.

PURPOSE OF THE CHARTER

The purpose of the Charter is to:

1. Identify what it means to be a “health promoting” university/institution of higher education.
2. Create dialogue and promote understanding about health promotion concepts within the university/higher education setting
3. Provide a tool for creating a “health promoting” university/institution of higher education for those who want to influence decision makers.

DEFINITIONS

Health Promotion From the Bangkok Charter for Health Promotion in a Globalized World (2005)

“The United Nations recognizes that the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being.

Health promotion is based on this critical human right and offers a positive and inclusive concept of health as a determinant of the quality of life and encompassing mental and spiritual well being.

Health promotion is the process of enabling people to increase control over their health and its determinants, and thereby improve their health. It is a core function of public health and contributes to the work of tackling communicable and non communicable diseases and other threats to health.”

Health Promoting Institutions of Higher Education

Health promoting universities/institutions of higher education look internally at their own systems, processes and culture and the influence these have on individual and organizational health and well being. Also, they accept responsibility for assuming a leadership role to contribute to increasing the health and wellbeing of society at large through collaboration and networking. As academic institutions they have collegial governance processes that are unique from other organizations.

GOALS

Health Promoting Universities/Institutions of Higher Education strive to:

- Institutionally model a health promoting culture and a sustainable working, living and learning environment
- Take action to improve the learning, working and living environments of staff and students
- Enable and support individuals to live a purposeful life and make healthy lifestyle choices
- Improve health services for staff and students
- Encourage staff and students to accept responsibility for their own health and wellbeing
- Encourage alumni to participate in advocacy of health promoting concepts and to be involved in institutional life
- Prepare students as citizens committed to promoting health in their organizations and communities
- Support health promotion in the community locally, regionally and globally

BELIEFS

Healthy Universities/Institutions of Higher Education believe in:

- Accepting organizational responsibility and accountability for the health and wellbeing of students and staff

- Promoting and creating healthy and sustainable learning, working and living environments
- Integrating health promotion into the campus culture and daily living
- Supporting holistic, interdisciplinary, interdepartmental, inter-institutional, inter-sectoral and international approaches to health promotion
- Being a place for training citizens and leaders to act locally, regionally and globally to promote health
- Engaging individuals in understanding their responsibility for their own health and wellbeing
- Taking a leadership role in health promotion and development of healthy public policy, locally, regionally and globally
- Accepting responsibility to encourage research on promotion, and for the sharing of research and best practices

HEALTH PROMOTION PRINCIPLES

- Collegial governance processes
- Individual and community/civic engagement
- Partnerships and networking
- Participatory processes
- Advocacy
- Empowerment
- Respect for social justice, inclusion and equity
- Environmental and social sustainability
- Healthy organizational and public policy

AUDIENCE AND STAKEHOLDERS

The Edmonton Charter seeks to broaden the understanding about health promoting universities/institutions of higher education and its audience and stakeholders include:

Internally

- Students
- Staff (academics, researchers, administrators, technical and support personnel)
- Alumni
- Providers of services
- Institutional/campus organizations

Externally

- The health promotion community
- Other Universities and Institutions of Higher Education
- Politicians, governments, policy and decision makers
- Our communities locally, regionally and globally

CHARACTERISTICS

Common characteristics of health promoting universities and institutions of higher education include:

- A setting based approach to health promotion
- A shared vision for health promotion
- Endorsement by the Senior leadership of the concepts of “health for all” and “sustainable development”
- Adopting a long term perspective on incorporating health promotion into every day campus life and to the cultural change that health promotion brings
- Allocating resources and committing to action on promoting institutional and individual health
- Incorporating health promotion into institutional strategic plans
- Embracing change through development of institutional policies, procedures, systems and practices to create and maintain healthy learning, working and living environments
- Creating individual and institutional knowledge about healthy choices and environments

COMMITMENT TO ACTION

- Appoint a committee of stakeholders to define strategy, process and outcomes.
- Provide resources and organizational structure to support the health promotion process and health promoting initiatives
- Seek to understand the issues affecting the health and well-being of students, staff and other stakeholders
- Adopt participatory, collaborative and inclusive processes to change and challenge policies, systems, processes and practices that hinder creation of healthy learning, working and living environments
- Engage individuals at all levels to participate in meaningful ways
- Encourage interest and share research results on health promotion within the local, regional and global communities
- Evaluate, measure and report results to stakeholders and networks
- Take a leadership role in health promotion locally, regionally and globally

NEXT STEPS

We the participants of the Edmonton International Conference for Health Promoting Universities and Institutions of Higher Education commit to:

1. Furthering the advancement of the concepts of “Health Promoting Universities and Institutions of Higher Education “ through advocacy, collaboration and networking locally, regionally and globally to achieve the Millennium Development Goals
2. Based on the Edmonton Charter, promote and take action to create change within our own institutions to further health promotion
3. Further discussion of the Edmonton Charter with colleagues and to provide feedback on the next steps in its development