What does it mean to go upstream?

Health and well-being begins in the communities where we live, work, learn, and play.

Social, economic, environmental, and political conditions determine people's opportunities for well-being.

Going upstream improves the conditions in which people live.

This enables everyone to be as healthy as possible and reduces the need to respond to health problems.

VCH Public Health collaborates with community partners for upstream health promotion.

Values, Norms, Laws & Policies

Societal features that are often invisible shape the conditions of daily life, determine who has power, and can create inequities.

Organizations can use data to make decisions that enable community action, create supportive environments, or to operate more equitably.

Conditions of Daily Life

Social, economic, and environmental factors determine opportunities for health and well-being and can reinforce inequities.

Enhancing protective factors such as income, education, early life experiences, housing, and social connections strengthens the foundations of health and well-being.

Focusing upstream benefits more people and reduces the need

to respond downstream

Community Capacity

Interventions and amenities reduce risks and build resilience to enable healthy living.

Capacity-building programs can reduce barriers and improve opportunities for health and well-being. Community resilience helps prevent negative health outcomes.

More effort

Downstream

Upstream

VCH Public Health funds activities that shift norms & policies, improve conditions of daily life, and strengthen community capacity.

Health & Social Services

Unfair, avoidable outcomes increase need for services.

People whose life circumstances put their health at risk require more services such as food banks, homeless shelters, or crisis interventions. Upstream action aims to avoid these outcomes.



VCH Public Health's Health Promotion Grants

VCH Public Health provides long-term core operational funding and one-time-only project grants. Grant recipients are community partners who work on upstream factors that are outside the control of the health sector. They bring on-the-ground knowledge and have long-term relationships in their communities.

Upstream projects are designed to enable systems change, build capacity, and strengthen factors that have the greatest influence on our health.

These VCH Public Health-funded projects are examples of going further upstream.

- network of agencies advocating for better policies to protect workers with precarious status
- peer training to engage isolated seniors with limited mobility
- capacity-building sessions to strengthen the work of a BIPOC-led organization board
- training materials and sessions for organizations to create safer spaces for gender-diverse communities
- projects that promote social, cultural, and intergenerational connectedness within Indigenous communities
- participatory projects to learn how to address emerging challenges such as eco-anxiety
- peer-led leadership programs
 for newcomer communities
- youth-driven programs to improve mental health and wellbeing at school

Learn more at vch.ca/en/service/health-promotion-grants

Contact us at community.investments@vch.ca

