Downstream, Upstream, Mainstream: *Getting to Equity*

New Mexico Chronic Disease Prevention Council

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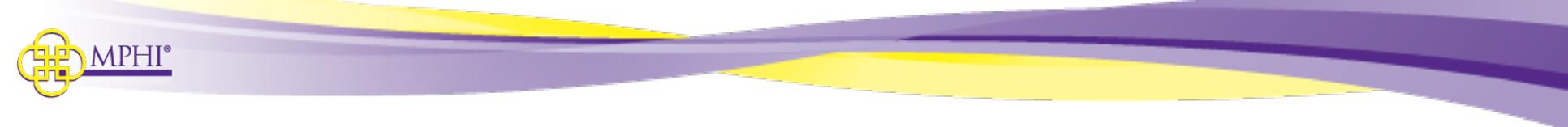
Downstream thinking: the tendency we have, as individuals and as decision-makers, to focus on one-off, individual lifestyle-based, short-term solutions rather than long-term interventions that address the root-causes of wellbeing.

--Rachel Malena-Chan,

thinkupstream.net
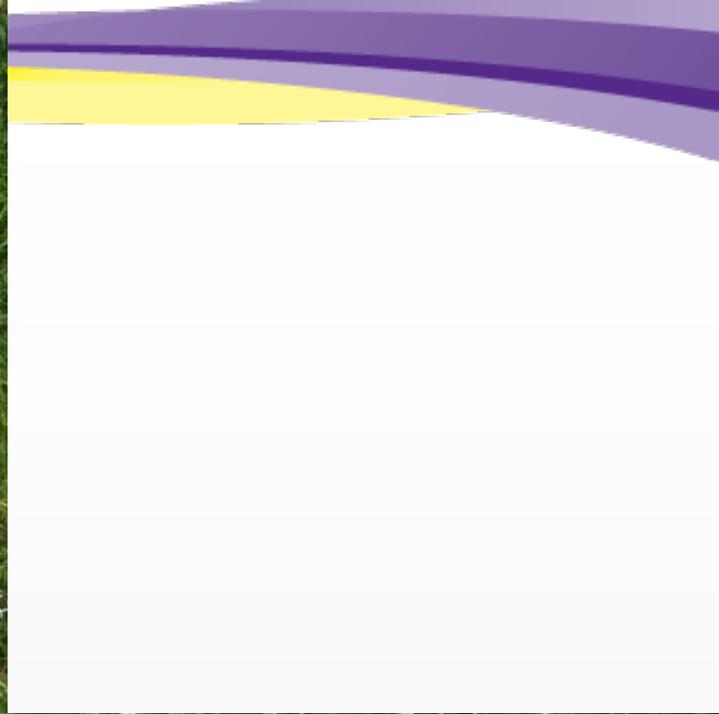
Old Downtown Store
By YOUneak / Shannon Frost

MPHI®

If we focus our attention on reducing disparities at the level of Social Determinants of Health, will we be reducing **health inequity**?

- Safe Affordable Housing
- Quality Education
- Job Security
- Social Connection & Safety
- Living Wage
- Reliable Transportation
- Availability of Healthy Food
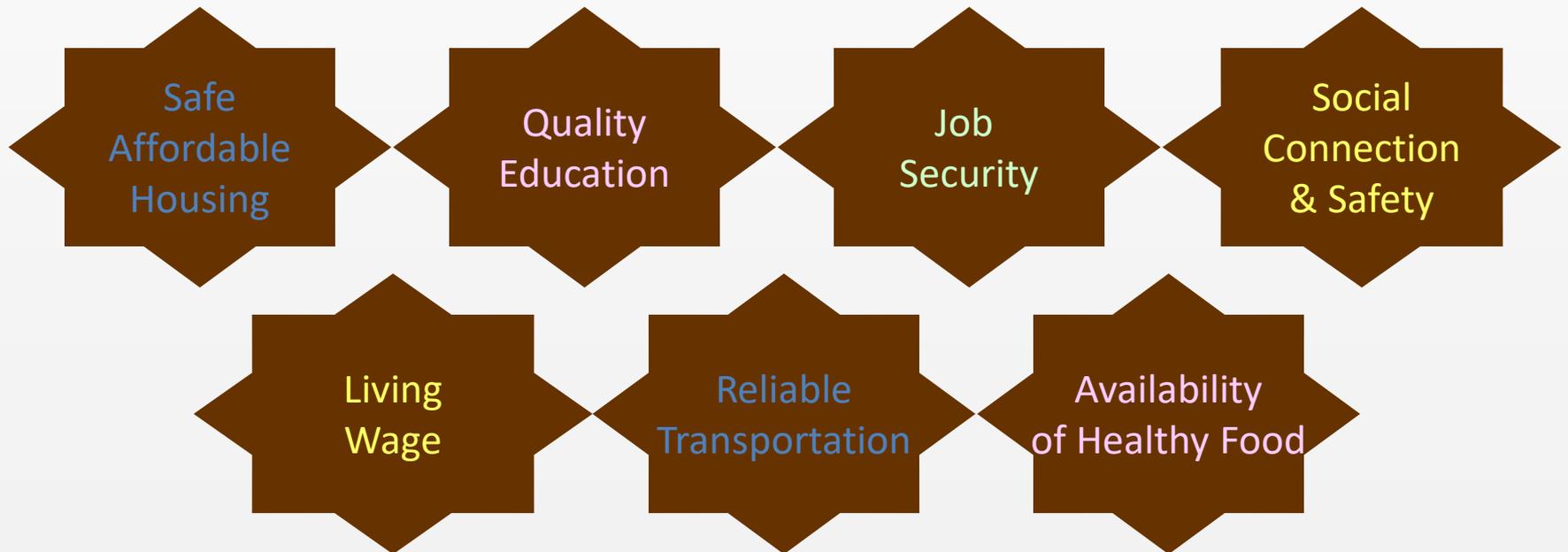
Health Inequity

"Differences in population [health] status and mortality rates that are <u>systemic</u>, <u>patterned</u>, <u>unfair</u>, <u>unjust</u>, and <u>actionable</u>, as opposed to random or caused by those who become ill."

-**Margaret Whitehead**

Health Equity

Health equity means that all have a fair and just opportunity for good health

Health equity is the ethical and human rights principle or value that motivates us to eliminate health disparities

-RWJF/Paula Braveman, UCSF

Health Equity

"This requires removing obstacles to health such as poverty, discrimination, and their consequences, including powerlessness and lack of access to good jobs with fair pay, quality education and housing, safe environments, and health care."

The moral drive that pushes us to address health disparities   -Paula Braveman

Upstream: Mainstream Confronting *Root Causes* *Explicitly*

Mainstream--the principal or dominant course, tendency or trend

Upstream--involves policy approaches that have the potential to affect
Populations through regulation, increasing access, or economic incentives

OPPRESSION

RACISM   **CLASSISM**   **GENDER-ISM**

Addressing Root Causes
Upstream: Mainstream

Social Structure/Root Causes

Power and Wealth Imbalance

Social Determinants of Health

Psychosocial Stress / Unhealthy Behaviors

Inequity in the Distribution of Disease, Illness, and Wellbeing

"Mainstream"

Upstream

Midstream

Downstream

Primary Prevention:
A Social Justice Framework

Social Determinants of Health

WHO: The conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age. These circumstances are shaped by the distribution of money, power and resources at global, national and local levels.

Social Justice Interpretation

Making the

Invisible Visible

&

Deconstructing

Racism/Oppression

Pushing SDOH Upstream
Safe & affordable <u>houses</u>
Safe & affordable <u>housing</u>

"Asking the Right Questions"
We don't get to Health Equity by having all the answers, but rather by asking the right questions

Getting Upstream as Mainstream

Instead of only asking:	Perhaps we should also ask:
Why do people smoke?	What social conditions and economic policies predispose people to the stress that encourages smoking?
Who lacks access to healthy food options and why?	What economic shifts would redistribute healthy food resources more equitably in our community?
How do we connect isolated individuals to social supports?	What institutional policies and practices maintain rather than counteract people's isolation from social supports?
Who lacks health care coverage and why?	What policy changes would redistribute health care resources more equitably in our community?

Getting Upstream as Mainstream

Recognize that treating the consequences of inequity through programs and services alone will never eliminate health inequity.

Mandate a re-examination of public health priorities, practices, and the use of resources.

Communicate facts about the forces that produce or undermine health to their constituencies, responsible public institutions, and political leaders.

Develop a policy agenda for health equity and identify strategic activities with constituencies that support this agenda.

Engage with communities to develop their capacity and resources to participate fully in social and political processes.

What changes are needed to move Upstream & get to Equity in your community?

Ask yourself these Questions regarding the Changes you have identified…

Would this change make an important difference?
(IMPACT)

Could this change be done? (If not, why not?)
(FEASIBILITY)

Would this change *stick?* (or would things go back to the status quo after the initial application?)
(SUSTAINABILITY)

Source: MPHI/MDHHS Learning Labs

"If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea."

Antoine de Saint-Exupery

- In all that you saw and heard here, what stands out for you as particularly relevant or stimulating in terms of your work?

- As you see yourself trying to apply these ideas, what challenges do you envision experiencing?

- What would you need to overcome these challenges?

- As a leader, how can you help create the world you want to work/live in?
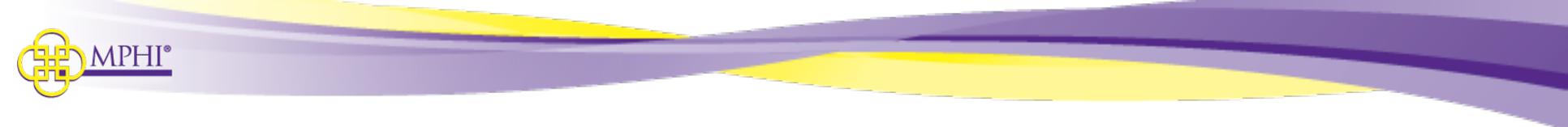
Thank you!

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